

C H R I S T
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P O W E R of G O D,
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A
S E R M O N

Preached at the opening of the
Synod of MERSE and TIVI-
OTDALE, OCTOBER 20th,
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E D I N B U R G H:

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READER,

I Little thought of publishing this Discourse, till several of my Reverend Brethren, whose Judgment I trust to more than mine own, advised me to the same. I am sensible the good Design is the most acceptable Part thereof; And I hope for the same Candour from all, who are well affected to the Purposes here contained. The Sermon is more full than what was discoursed in Publick: Partly because I would not take up the Synod's Time, in delivering that I had conceived upon the Subject; and partly because in revising it for the Press, I found it needful to add a few Thoughts, for the clearing of some Points. May the LORD bless it for the Edification of Souls. Amen.



1. COR. i. 23, 24.

We preach — Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.

THAT the Jews expected their *Messias* to be the Power of God, is evident from *Isa. ix. 6. Unto us a Son is given, and the Government shall be upon his Shoulders, and His Name shall be called the Mighty God.* And *Psal. lxxxix. 19. I have laid Help upon one that is Mighty.* And perhaps the Samaritans, who had the same Expectation with the Jews, had a Respect to this, when they called *Simon Magus* the Great Power of God. *Act. viii. 10.* And that the *Messias* was also promised and expected, as the Wisdom of God, is evident from the whole eighth Chapter of the *Proverbs*:

Hence says the Apostle, *We Preach the Messias the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* So I would choose to read it; for the Word *CHRIST*, doth not now form the same Idea it did in the Days of the Apostles: People now looking upon it as a Proper Name, whereas it signifies a particular Dignity, Office and Employment, while the Term *Messias* hath always kept its natural Signification. *We Preach the Messias* to Jews and Gentiles, *Who is the Immanuel, who from ancient Times hath chosen the Gentiles to hear and believe the Word of the Gospel, as well as the Jews.* So I humbly conceive, that Passage *Act. xv. 7.* should be rendered * And tho' neither Rome nor Athens

* My Reasons are, 1. *Θεός ἐν ἡμῖν* is the express Interpretation of *Immanuel*, whether we consider *ἐν* in its natural Signification, or take it for *μετά*, as is usual. 2. It gives a very low Sense of *ἡμετέραν ἀρχαίαν*, and which the Words, according

Athens should stoop to him: Tho' the *Jews*, thro' a fond Conceit of a *Temporal Saviour*, should despise him: Tho' all the *Conceited*, and all the *Bigotted*: Tho' all the *Proud*, and all the *Prophane* should inwardly in their Hearts, or outwardly with their Lips, contemn and deride *Salvation* by a *Crucified Saviour*; yet we Preach *Jesus of Nazareth crucified*, to be the true *Messias*, who is the *Power of God* and the *Wisdom of God*.

In discoursing upon this, through Divine Assistance, we shall endeavour to show, First, some *Instances*, wherein Ministers of the Gospel Preach *Christ* as the *power of God*. Secondly, some *Instances*, wherein they Preach *Christ* as the *Wisdom of God*. And, lastly, conclude with a few *Inferences*.

First, In what *Instances* Ministers of the Gospel preach *Christ* as the *Power of God*.

First, We preach *Christ the Power of God* in emptying * himself, *Phil. ii. 7, of the Splendor and Effulgency of the Divine Nature*: Or, of the actual Display and Irradiation of his Glory: Or whatever it was, it was some *Glory*, which he had with his Father, before the World was, *Jo. xvii. 8*. This, one would think, were more hard and difficult, than for the Sun to abstract his Beams; That *Sadness* and *Grief* should enter into the very Seat of *Light* and *Joy*; That the *Light* of the World should be in an Hour of *Darkness*; That he, who was girt with Omnipotence, should suffer the Pains of *Death*: This was not an Act of *Weakness*, but of the *Power of God*, as shall afterwards appear: Or, at least, we may apply

according to any Authority I know of, cannot bear, to commence them from the Conversion of *Cornelius*, which was only about eleven Years before. Δια τῆς σωματικῆς, may be considered either in Parenthet. i. e. fulfilled by my Mouth, or may be contained in ἐξελεξατο, for a Prophecie, or a Decree about an End, includes also the Means.

* ἐκένωσεν

ply here what the Apostle says in the following Verse. That *the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.*

And what can be more evident than that Christ's assuming of the Human Nature, and his uniting of it to himself in a personal Union, was an Instance of God-like Power in him, *Heb. ii. 14. He took Part in our Nature,* and *v. 16. He took on him the Seed of Abraham.* Which as it shews that he *was* before he took it; so also that it was by his own *Active Power*: And by it, his eternal Power and God-head are clearly to be seen. For if a vital Union between an immortal Spirit and Piece of Earth, or a Lump of Flesh in Man, be a Thing so wonderful, as that there is no accounting for the same, but by resolving it into the supreme Power and Will of God; much more a personal Union, between what we shall call, at this Time, a super-angelick Nature, and the Nature of Man. And since this super-angelick Person had an active Hand in the Business, that is, not only *was* before this Conjunction of himself with our Nature, but also the very *Assumer* of it, and that into a personal Union with himself: This evidently demonstrates, that not only *He was of old, even from everlasting,* but also that the infinite Power of God is in him. Where was it ever heard, that the Soul did take to itself a Body, or take on itself a Body? The *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists*, who held even the Pre-existence and Transmigration of Souls, yet never spoke at this Rate, nor dreamed of the same, but spoke of Souls being detruded into Bodies or imprisoned in them, and so looked upon their Souls as being only passive in this Matter. And 'tis certain, that *Passives* only would be proper here, were there nothing but a created Power.

2dly, We Preach Christ the Power of God in his working of Miracles, *Jo. v. 38.* I do not stay to describe the Nature and Evidence of a Miracle. I call it, in general, a stupenduous Work of Power, wherein the Finger of God is clearly to be seen. If any shall offer

a lower *Idea* thereof, as signifying any *Work*, therefore called *extraordinary*, because above the *Capacity* and *Agency* of Men, and hereby darken the *Evidence* of a true *Miracle*: all I shall observe is, that this would be a *Notion* of it so low, as not to reach the *Particulars* in *Question*: Since however God may allow *Angels* to be *Agents*, in *Affairs* that can be done, without the *Interposition* of an infinite Power, yet the *Works* done by our Saviour, either as to the *Matter* or *Manner* of them, were so mighty, that no Man could do them, unless God were with him, Jo. iii. 2.

And 'tis strang', how any should imagine, that *Satan's* lying *Signs* and *Wonders* do darken the *Evidence* of *Miracles*. For, is it true in *Fact*, that God hath not confirmed his *Revelation*, by an *extraordinary Work*, but what Satan hath equalled, in the confirming of *Error*? Or is it well argued, that God cannot by any *Extraordinary Work*, that surmounts the Power of all created *Beings*, give sufficient *Proof* of a *Divine Miracle*, if Satan can effect some *Things* in Favour of *Error*, which surpasses the Power and Knowledge of Man? Or has not a Man sufficient *Reason* to determine him to embrace a *Doctrine* as *Truth*, if two contrary Powers work each of them *extraordinary Facts*, when the one makes it evident from the Nature, Number and Greatness of his *Works*, that he infinitely excels the other, in Power Wisdom and Goodness? Or, would this Argument be conclusive, *Weak Mortals* know not how far *Created Agents*, and particularly *Evil Powers*, may effect what appears to them above *Natural Causes*, or for which they can give no natural Reason; therefore the *Finger of God* can never be seen in any *Work*? Who sees not the Absurdity of this Kind of Reasoning? What Difficulty is there in conceiving that a *Greater Power* should confound a *Lesser*? Or, what Place is there for Suspence, when we see this actually done? Tho' I know not how far the Power of Nature may extend, yet may I not be infallibly

infallibly certain, that there are some Things beyond its Reach? I know not but some one Man, by a certain Elasticity, or a previous Management of his Body may be able to jump several Ells in Height, but may I not be sure enough, that he cannot jump above the Moon? We might expose the Absurdity of this Kind of Reasoning in many Instances, could we stay upon it.

What I mean by all this is, That I would have the *Miracles* stand as a certain *Proof* by themselves of a *Divine Mission*, distinct from the *Doctrine*, tho' the two together cast Light *mutually* upon one another.

I am surprized to find in some of our Modern Writers the Evidence of Miracles denied, on this slender Pretext, that they are *Evidences* of the *Power*, but not of the *Veracity* of the *Being* that works them, and consequently may attend a *Lie*. Who did ever imagine, that *Infinite Power* and *Infinite Veracity* could be seated in different *Subjects*, or that being in the same *Subject*, they can ever *clash* with one another? Can I ever be more sure of any Proposition than this, *Where there is an Infinity of Power, there must be necessarily an Infinity of all Perfections; and hence that 'tis impossible, that an Infinite Power can confirm a Lie, or stablish a Vice?* If therefore I am infallibly assured, that an *Infinite Power* hath interposed to attest such a *Doctrine*, however incredible the said *Doctrine* should appear to *Reason*, I am bound to believe it. Why? Because no Moral or Theological Truth can be more certain than this, (yea the *Certainty* of of all *Natural*, as well as *Revealed* Religion depends upon it) that *Infinite Power* can never interfere with *Infinite Veracity*, or *Infinite Goodness*: Or, that God can never be against himself. And who can think it an excessive *Humility*, or *Abnegation* of his Understanding to submit it, as well as his Will, to the Mind and Will of God; If he hath but so much *Faith*, or even to much *Reason* as to believe, that God is as much *Wiser*, as he is more *Powerful* than Men?

Thirdly, We preach Christ the Power of God in raising himself from the Dead, Jo. ii. 19. Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up. Jo. x. 18. I have Power to lay down my Life, and Power to take it up again. Thoulands of Deaths could not overcome him. Mountains of Brass could not hold him down. He rose again, and who but the Prince of Life could have done so?

The *soldiers* said His *Disciples* took him away by Night, when they were *asleep*. The *Apostles* said They were *Eye-witnesses* of his being *risen*: And which of the two should be believed, will easily appear. For,

1. Who could be most *certain*? Those who attested the *Affirmative*, or those who attested only the *Negative*? The Persons that told what was done, when they were *asleep*, and so could not see it nor know it; Or those who told what they saw, when *awake*?

2. Who were most *disinterested* in their Testimony? The *Chief Priests*, who by their admitting *Jesus Christ* for their *Messias*, saw they were to lose the *Grandeur* both of their *Church* and *State*, Jo. xi. 48. Or the *Apostles*, who saw that if *Christ* was not *risen*, they sacrificed their *Credit*, *Ease*, *Fortunes*, *Lives*, *Souls*, and eternal *Happiness* for *Nothing*? For if *Christ* was not *risen*, then both in *Time* and *Eternity*, of all Men they were most miserable.

This is an Argument so posing, that *Vaninus*, after the most accurate Search, that so shrewd an Adversary could make, was forc'd to give up this Point, not being able to charge *Christ Jesus*, or his *Disciples* with any *Secular Design*, or *Interest*.

The Modern *Infidels* turn it upon *Ambition*: The plain Meaning of which, is, that Men are *ambitious* of *Disgrace*, for *Disgrace's Sake*, and of *Misery* for *Misery's Sake*: A Supposition so *unnatural*, that the very Terms over-throw one another. Or, they put it on *Revenge*, which is, as if one should say, a Man in Pursuit

Pursuit of *Revenge*, which he knows will be altogether impotent and vain, will be at the utmost Pains, and undergo all Manner of Difficulties, in doing what he sees infallibly bringing the *Vengeance* of God and Men, Heaven and Earth, upon *himself*: Which would be such a Piece of extreme Dottage, that if it can be *supposeable* in the Apostles, yet sure was never to be found in any Set of Men, nor shall ever be found in any after them, being inconsistent with the *Principles* of Self preservation, rooted in the *Human Nature*.

And, what can more strongly confirm us in the sure Belief of *Christ's Resurrection*, and all the other *Credentials* of his *Divine Mission*, than the perverse *Disputings* of Men destitute of the Truth?

They suppose the Apostles had Reason to be *partial* in their Testimony concerning *Christ*, tho' if they were not sure of the Truth of what they delivered of him, they were sure of Disgrace, Pain and Loss in this World, and inevitable Damnation in the World to come.

They suppose, that Men not *distracted* or bereft of their *Wits*, would think it safe to entrust the grand Secret of an *Imposture* to many hundreds of all Sexes, Capacities and Characters: And that no Torments could ever force so much as one of them to own the *Imposture*.

Some of them would be thought good Christians, tho' 'tis evident from their charging Christ Jesus with Imposture, that they are far from coming the Length of *Judas Iscariot*, who could not have so much Jealousie of a Cheat in this Matter, as could save him from hanging himself: And hence he pronounces Christ to be an innocent Person.

They argue in Favours of the *Devil*, as if in the Apostles Days he had more of the *Fool* than of the *Knave*; Or rather had altogether *undevild* himself, by promoting a Doctrine that pulls down his Kingdom.

They represent Men as so *unhappy Beings*, as to be under a Necessity of being imposed upon: Since

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Christ the Power of God,

a great Multitude of Persons, sober, judicious and inquisitive, are supposed not only freely to forsake their former *Persuasions*, but also to deny their former *Satisfactions*; and for no Purpose, but that they may *resolutely be undone*.

They argue, as if *transient Views* were more certain and probative, than *permanent Views* and *Effects*: That is, had they been present with the *Witch of Endor*, and seen a Judge, like *Samuel*, come up from the Earth, this they would have believed to be a true Resurrection, but if they had not been present to see this, tho' *Samuel* should have often appeared to the *Sons of the Prophets*, to the full Satisfaction of all their Senses, of Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, &c. yea left a *double Portion* of his Spirit upon them; all this would be no Proof to them of *Samuel's Resurrection*.

They reject all the *Evidence of Testimony*, and deny *God Almighty* to give them Satisfaction in this Particular; the Tendency of their Argument amounting to this, *If Jesus appeared to many Hundreds, whereby they were most certain of his Resurrection, and through all Hazards became his Followers, then they are Parties, and their Testimony is not to be regarded*: And, at the same Time, if he affords not that Evidence to others, they want, as they think, sufficient *Credentials*: And so however it is they are resolved against *believing*.

They deny the Apostles wrought any Miracles; And yet they believe, they persuaded Men of *Facts*, as actually done in their Sight, which every Man's Eyes and Senses did contradict: When yet if they did this, it was a Miracle with a *Witness*, or rather with a *Vengeance*: For to cheat all the Senses of Mankind at once, exceeds all the Powers of *Hell*.

Or they say, These *Facts* were invented sometime after, when the Men of that Generation, wherein the Things were said and done, were all dead and gone: That is, they suppose some, in an *After-age*,
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did assure the Generation then living, that *Jesus Christ* had wrought such extraordinary Facts, and as a certain Proof of this, had instituted *Baptism*, and the *Lord's Supper*, and other publick Documents, as Memorials of these Things; all which had been observed without Interruption from the Time of *Jesus Christ*, in Testimony whereof some of themselves had been at the *Supper*, and their Children were *baptized*: All this they persuaded them of, when at the same Time that Generation knew most certainly, that no such Thing was ever believed, or so much as heard among them. This again would be a Miracle greater than any *Devil* in *Hell* can work, unless he can first turn People mad.

They deny that God has a *Power* to work Miracles: Their Arguments for the most Part amounting to this, That either a natural Cause can be assigned for such an *Effect*, and so 'tis no Miracle; or, it cannot, and so 'tis not credible. And so their Argument is, *There are no Miracles, because there can be none*: That is, they are sure enough that divine Power can do nothing above their *Reach*.

They value their *Wit*, because of their *Unbelief*, and yet they believe: Greater Paradoxes than a Christian can believe; particularly, among many Instances, that there may be such a *Jumble* and *Confusion* of Causes and Effects, as that Causes can neither be known by their Effects, nor Effects prognosticate by their Causes; but the *worst* of Causes may produce the *best* of Effects; that is, they suppose a Religion to be so good and perfect, that no Supplement can be made to it, and yet the first Author and Publishers of it, to be wicked Impostors; the Religion the best that can be, and yet the Revealers of it to be Cheats. This is a Pitch or a Kind of Faith, that no Christian can ever attain unto. He could sooner believe that Heaven shall shake out all its glorious Inhabitants, and run with Earth into their old *Chaos*, than believe such a Thing to be possible.

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And now I would ask, Is it well done in any Man, that has the least Pretention to Humanity, to put such a horrible Affront on the Understanding of his Fellow Creatures, as to think that any in the World, for the Sake of such miserable *Inconsistencies*, will forsake a Religion, that is so illustrative of God's moral Excellencies, and so adapted to the Nature and present Circumstances of Men; and which is confessed by its Adversaries to be good, useful, and conform to the Law and Religion of Nature?

Fourthly, We preach *Christ the Power of God in saving us*, Matth. i. 21. *Thou shalt call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his People from their sins.* And, 1 Thess. i. 10. We are told, that *Jesus delivers us from the Wrath to come.* And how? Is it by Way of Satisfaction? But what finite Power can make a full Satisfaction for the infinite Dishonour and Injury Sin hath done unto God? And any Thing less than a full Satisfaction, is infinitely less; and so 'tis as good as none. Or, is it by way of Purchase? But who can buy Souls, but He that can claim them as his own, and dare assert his Dominion over them; which is God's sole Prerogative? Or, is it by Way of proper Efficiency, in delivering us from the Hands of our Enemies? But as Sin makes us fall into the Hands of a *living God*, what Creature in Heaven or in Earth, who among Angels or among Men, can deliver us again from his Hand? No less than an increased Power can deliver us from the *Wrath to come*. Who but God could accomplish so difficult an *Enterprize* as the Salvation of Man, and surmount so many Difficulties as opposed themselves to the same? Who could deliver us from eternal Death, but the *Author and Prince of Life*? Who could purge our Consciences from the Impurities of Sin, and the Uneasiness of Guilt, but He, who, as he is the *King of Nations*, so also, in a particular Manner, the *King of Saints*? None can save us, but He that made us. The Salvation of Mankind being certainly as divine a Work,

as the Creation of the World. We must necessarily believe, that no less than a divine Power is in Christ, else how can we believe He is able to save us from the Demerit of Sin, and the Wrath of God. This being more than any, or all the Creatures in the World are able to do. And this leads us to other Points, which are but the Amplification of this.

Fifthly, We preach *Christ the Power of God in satisfying divine Justice for us. He himself bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, 1 Pet. i. 24. He suffered, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18.* The Man that believes the *Holiness* of God, the very *Foundation* I may call it of his *God-like Bliss*, and of the infinite Contentment he hath in himself, which carries in it a perfect Detestation of Sin, and inclines him to animadvert with Severity against it: And the Man that believes the *Justice* of God, and that there is no Justice more necessary or more essential to him, than what he owes unto himself; and that in this respect, he hath not any Right he can part with; he cannot part with his Sovereignty and Rectorship of the World, more than part with his Being: And the Men that believes, that 'tis *God-like* in him to do what becomes him, that is, to let it be seen, how sacred the *Rights* of his Government are, and how horrid a Thing it is for a silly Worm to be ill affected to the very *Being* and *Blessedness* of God: That Man must believe, that there is a *Necessity of Satisfaction* for the Indignity done unto God, before the rebellious Sinner can be restored unto his Favour. I wonder not that the Doctrines of the Deity, Incarnation and Satisfaction of the Son of God, should stand and fall together, since it would puzzle a Man to find any End lower than this, worthy of the *Incarnation*, not to say, the *Sufferings* of the Son of God. For it appears to be little less than a Contradiction, to own the Son of God, his coming down in our Nature, and yet deny the only assignable, at least, the

the most adequate End of his Incarnation and Passion. We are absolutely to believe the Unity of the God-head, but as *Simplicity* is not a scriptural Attribute of him, so 'tis owned from the Principles, both of natural and revealed Religion, that an *omnimodus* Simplicity would be no Perfection. It is not against Reason then, to conceive such a Distinction in the Deity, as admits of the Incarnation of the one without the other: So that it shall not be the same Person that satisfies and receives the Satisfaction. Suppose Mankind had in a particular Manner invaded the Rights of the Angels, and that a Satisfaction became necessary, else never more to be any Coalition together: Suppose again, one of the Angels, able to make the Satisfaction, should assume the human Nature, and in it suffer and perform whatever was necessary, as an EQUIVALENT: Who could deny this to be a true and proper Satisfaction? I know no *Simile* can come up to this Mystery; and no Wonder, since all that is in God, is *incomprehensible*: As *Tertullian* says, *I would not worship that God I could comprehend.*

Hence, we preach *Christ the Power of God* in satisfying for our Sins. And what other Power could translate, on his own innocent *Self*, the infinite Weight of our Sins, a Burden that would have broken the Back of the strongest Angels, and crack'd the Axle-tree of Heaven and Earth? What other Power could bear him up, and cause him elude from under the divine Wrath? And what other Power could make him overcome in our very Nature, Devils, Powers, and Principalities of Darkness?

Sixthly, We preach *Christ the Power of God* in enlightening dark Minds. He came as a Light into the World, John xii. 46. He sent the Gospel to open Mens Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, Act. xxvi. 18. Any moral Suasion, or setting forth of the Object, can no more give Light to a dark Mind, than the Beams of the Sun can give Light to a Man
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born blind. He not only reveals the Object, but by a *physical Agency*, so I must call it for Want of a better Term, he clears, illustrates and spiritualizeth the intellectual Powers: And no less Power than the Power of God, can effect this. 'Tis only he that *commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, that shines in our Hearts to give us the Light of the Glory of God*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Whereby a Man is brought into a *new World*, and finds himself beset with new Wonders. For tho' the unenlightened may apprehend the same Objects, with the enlightened, yet they have not the same Apprehensions of them; there are many Peculiarities, which gracious Souls perceive. Yea, I think it may be questioned, whether the Unregenerate apprehend the same Objects. The Business seems to be this, spiritual Things are described under sensible Metaphors, and corporeal Images, and their Knowledge terminates only on the *sensible Image*, but the *spiritual Thing* they do not discern, 1 Cor. ii. 14. We might shew this in all their Conceptions of spiritual Objects, but we shall hold with *one*, as comprehensive of all the rest; and that is, Their Apprehension of *Heaven*. What more usual than for the unholy and unrighteous to be hoping for Heaven? What is Heaven? 'Tis a State of perfect Freedom from Sin, perfect Holiness, perfect Conformity to the Nature and Image of God. Is this the Heaven that such ungodly Souls are hoping for? Are they hoping for the perfect Holiness in Heaven, who hate the imperfect Holiness on Earth? Are they hoping to have that perfected, which they cannot endure should ever be begun? All is Contradiction. 'Tis not Heaven that such hope for, but some false Conceit of it, some Fool's Paradise, some Castle built in the Air, some Elysian Fields, or some confused Notion of a Happiness in general, without knowing wherein it consists; or, perhaps, 'tis some dark Territories, which, tho' they please better than the black Regions of Hell, yet it appears not so lightsome and
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so pleasant to them, as the Sun in the Firmament. And hence they think it but a small Compliment, to wish they were in that Heaven of theirs, and much less to be in the real Heaven. It would be but a cold Comfort to have it told them, that, This Night they should be with Christ in *Paradise*. At best, 'tis their *Imagination* that is only gratified, with the Description of Heaven; but their *Reason* is not satisfied; and so all is but *Imagery* in their Fancy, and Nothing at all of the true State of Heaven is perceived.

The Design of this Remark is to shew, that tho' in our Discourses, strong and lively Images are not only allowable, but also necessary, by Reason of the close vital Union between an organized Body, and an immortal Spirit in us; yet I think, they should be soundly explained, and dexterously applied, because of the great Hazard People are in, of being misled by them, so as to grasp at the *Shadow* instead of the *Substance*.

Seventhly, We preach *Christ the Power of God*, in convincing secure and stupid Consciences. 'Tis the Spirit of Christ that is sent into the World to convince Men of Sin, Jo. xvi. 8. And this I call also an Act of Power, because there is not only a particular Application of Light to the Conscience, but an immediate Reach of Christ's Power: That is, there is a Command of the supreme Judge, and a Power in the Command, to his Deputy and Substitute in our Bosom, to do its Office with a masterly Vigour. And this, as it may be inferred from the Immediateness and Suddenness of these Awakenings of Conscience, scarce leaving Time for the usual leisurely Steps of Ratiocination, tho' at the same Time acting in such a Manner, as quickens a rational Progress: So also it may be cleared from the Spirit of Adoption, Rom. viii. 16. witnessing with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God; which is a Testimony distinct from, and more forcible than the Testimony of our own Spirits.

Hence, by the Rule of Contraries, in a Work of

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Conviction, besides an Application of the Law, which is but weak through the *Flesh*, there is an *Application* of the *Spirit* of Christ; which, tho' with Respect to this particular Effect thereof, it is called the *Spirit of Bondage*, yet is a Spirit of *Power*, invigorating the Conscience to do its Office, with marvellous Energy and Strength,

Eighthly, We preach *Christ the Power of God*, in distressing and terrifying Souls, He makes his sharp Arrows pierce into the Hearts of his Enemies, Ps. lxxv. 5. Yea also, he is pleased sometimes either for *Correction*, or *Trial*, to send his immediate Terrors into the very Heart of the Souls of his own People. Examples of which we have in *Job*, *Heman*, and *David*. And as the Spirit of Man is immediately subject to God alone, so no less Power than his, can immediately reach it. 'Tis true, the LORD is pleased sometimes to make use of a melancholick Constitution, to cast up in the Mind, many gloomy Views and terrible Thoughts: Is therefore the whole of Soul Distresses to be resolved into melancholly Vapours? I should think the quite contrary, that since the LORD can make use of a Body to grieve and pain a Soul, he can much more strike that Soul with his own Hand, and with immediate Impressions of his Anger and Wrath. Unless one should as impiously, as absurdly, not only deny his *Power*, but also think that such *Things* as Devils, and all incorporeal rebel Spirits, are utterly without the Reach of his Justice and Wrath; or that there is no Torment in Hell that can vex them. Some may brave it out in very florid Discourses, that the intrinsic Turpitude of Sin is a sufficient Punishment in itself to the Offender: But where is the Man that would be willing enough to punish himself, according to the Demerit of Sin? To such a Pitch of Depravation hath his Self-love now degenerate, that he would rather excuse and extenuate his Sins. Or, if he were willing, where would be his *Strength* to do it? Could the feeble Arm of a Creature inflict on himself a Punishment adequate

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adequate to the infinite Malignity of Sin, and the infinite Justice of God?

Ninthly, We preach *Christ the Power of God*, in *regenerating and renewing of Souls*. 'Tis he that *renews us in the Spirit of our Minds*, Eph. iv. 23. 'Tis he that *quickens us when dead in Trespasses and Sins*, Eph. ii. 1. 'Tis he that *makes us Partakers of the divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4.

Some deny this *new Birth*, or understand by it, only a *Relative*, and not an *intrinsic subjective Change* made in the very Temper and Disposition of the Soul, whereby the Powers and Faculties of the Soul are turned off from sensual and sinful Objects, and determined Godwards. But, dare any venture their Souls upon it, that this Change only of a *Relation* is all that God means by *Regeneration* or the *new Birth*? Are they as sure as they hope to be saved, that God intends no more by the strong Expressions of having a *new Heart created in us*, and a *right Spirit renewed in us* (a); by being *God's Workmanship* (b); by being *Partakers of the divine Nature* (c); by having *Christ formed in us* (d); by being *born of God* (e); and *born of the Spirit of God* (f)? Is it a safe Side of the Question, to think that neither one or all of these Phrases, import any *intrinsic and subjective Change*, in the Disposition and Inclination of the Soul, when at the same Time, this is the natural and peculiar Import of the Terms? Is it agreeable to the Rules of Prudence in other Cases, to chuse such a Side of the Question as may be short of the main Design? Have I not need to hit upon the true Sense of these Passages, which the Scripture makes necessary for my Salvation? At least, not rest in a Sense that is short of them?

What Incongruity is there in the Nature of the Thing? Or, what Hardship is it on Reason to believe, that he that formed the Spirit of Man within him, should

(a) Psal. li. 10. (b) Eph. ii. 10. (c) 2 Pet. i. 4. (d) Gal. iv. 19. (e) 1 John iii, 9 (f) John iii. 6.

should stamp his Image upon it, and fashion it to his Likeness? Or, what Hurt will it do to a Man? Or, what Loss can he be at, if he expect *much*, yea his *All*, from the Hand of God, or from the Spirit of God? Or, what Good will it do to a Man? Or, how will it be to his Advantage, to have none to help him, none to cleanse him, none to quicken, and none to strengthen him? Suppose in perfect Health, when Pride comes to its Height, thou should be well conceited of thyself, and think thou canst shift well enough without God, or at least, that thou needest little at his Hands; yet when grim Death stares thee in the Face, will it not be needful that thou should have another Assistance to look to, than the utmost Stir and Excitation of all thy *natural Powers*.

What Inconvenience is there in this Doctrine? Or, what bad Effects can follow it, if a Man believe, that the Spirit of God can renew him, or that any Good in him is by the Grace of our Redeemer? Will it make a Man less Holy, Humble, or Diligent? I trow not, on the contrary, 'tis the earnest and humble Dependence of the Soul on GOD and his Grace, that is the very *Creaturely* and right Posture of the Soul towards him. What would be the very Rectitude, Order, and joyful Harmony of the now depraved Soul? Why, 'tis the claiming no more than its *Right*, which, as it is to be *little* or *nothing* in itself as a Creature, and altogether *nothing* in Comparison of God; for if HE IS, AND THERE IS NONE BESIDES HIM, what is left of *Being* to the Creature, but the *Name* thereof: So also, to be *less* and *worse* than *Nothing* by Reason of *Sin*. And again, 'tis the yielding to God what of Right pertains to him, which, as 'tis to have a Fulness of *Being*, so also a Fulness of *Grace* in himself: For I judge it but reasonable to think that we are as *little* in ourselves, or have as much of *Non-entity* in our *second* Creation, as in our *first*. Hence as the Soul must submit to him, in Humiliation, Self-abasement and Resignation, so also it must

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depend

depend on his *Grace*, and give him this *Glory* that is due to him; that 'tis he *of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all Things*, Rom. xi. 36. Hence this looking to God for his Spirit and Grace, as 'tis a *Mean* of Holiness, for God giveth usually according to the Measure of our Dependence on him, so 'tis also a *State* of Holiness; 'tis the Right State and Posture of the Soul God-wards and Christ-wards; 'tis our Conformity to God; 'tis the Impression on us that is correspondent to his being the *First* and the *Last*, the Original and Final Cause of all Things. The very Purity of the Soul lies in its firm Adherence to God in Christ. But when other Objects intervene, and draw off the Soul from its Dependence, it becomes vilely debased, keeps not its Subordination to God, and loses as it were its proper Place in the Creation; for is not a Soul misplaced, when 'tis taken off its very Center, and becomes a *Vagabond*, and *Fugitive from the Presence of the Lord*?

Tenthly, *We preach Christ the Power of God in pardoning our manifold Transgressions, and subduing our mighty Sins.* He is the exalted Prince and Saviour, that gives Repentance and Remission of Sins, Act. v. 31. Who can forgive Sins but God? All the Angels, with all their Strength, cannot take Sin off the Soul. All Creatures in Heaven or in Earth cannot loose him whom God hath bound. 'Tis God's incommunicable Prerogative to forgive and do away Sins. 'Tis an Act of Supremacy and of Sovereignty, and the Power of the Lord is great, when he does it. Num. xiv. 17. *Let the Power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, the Lord is long-suffering, and of great Mercy, forgiving Iniquity and Transgression.* Any hath Power enough to damn himself, but 'tis beyond the Power and Activity of Angels or Men to blot out the least Sin, or to disintangle the Soul from the least Corruption. They can neither take off its guilt, nor subdue its Power.

Lastly,

Lastly, We preach *Christ the Power of God, in raising Souls to Heaven, and in raising Bodies from the Grave. He is the Resurrection and the Life, Jo. xi. 25.* What but a divine Power can raise a Soul, once altogether Earthy, ingulft in Matter, and sunk in Sense, as high as the highest Heavens? Who can exalt unto Heaven, but He, whose Throne is above the Stars? Shall Souls, that besides their natural Biass to Earth, were fettered and inveigled with innumerable unavoidable Objects, diverting, nay commanding them another Way, shall these Souls be disintangled, and take their Flight Heaven wards! Certainly not by their own Might or Strength can they reach it, but by the *Power* of our Redeemer. Shall Moles! Earth-worms! rise above all that's terrestrial and temporal, above all the Regions where Mortality dwells! Who but God can effect this? Shall a Soul, that was once sitting in Darkness, and had the Shadows of Death sitting on its Eye-lids, shall that Soul be raised to the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light!* This is the Doing of the Lord, 'tis the proper Work of a Deity, and none but God could atchieve such a Work.

Again, What but an infinite Power can re-unite, rectify and bring up again, the Particles of the Dust, that were lodged in the secret Chambers of the Earth? Who could rescue our Bodies from the Grave, but He that *made* them? Who but the Lord, who proclaimed to *Moses* in the Bush, that He was *The Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Exod. iii.* can make them, who were long since dead, live again unto God? *Luk. xx. 38.* Or, who but He, that can make good the Covenant of Life and Salvation, he entred into, not with the Souls only, but with the whole Persons of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*; who, I say, but this Great *Jehovah* can make dry Bones live? Who but the I AM,

AM, or BEING itself, *Rom. ix. 5.* † can mould our Dust again into a human Body? and breathe into its Nostrils the Breath of Life? Who can conceive any other should be able to destroy Death, and the Works of the Devil, and overthrow the Empire of Hell?

The second Point in the Method is to shew, in what *Instances* Ministers of the Gospel preach, *Christ to be the Wisdom of God?*

First, *We preach Christ to be the Wisdom of God, in his Contrivance of the Work of our Redemption.* He was one of the Council held in ELOHIM from all Eternity, about Man's Salvation. All the beautiful Parts of this divine Scheme were framed in his Breast, who is the WISDOM, *Prov. viii.* *That was by the Father from everlasting, and before the Earth was,* did delight in the Thoughts of his own Heart, about the Restoration of the Children of Men. A *Contrivance*, so deep and mysterious, that if God had summoned Men and Angels to have sitten down in Council, to contrive the Way of our Redemption, what a confused Demur and Non-plus should they soon have been put in! Suppose a Consultation, would not the first Question have been, *How can it be,* that

† I humbly conceive, That, *Rom. ix. 5.* *ὁ ὢν ἐν παντί* *Θεὸς ἐν λογιῇ* *εἰς τὴν αἰῶνα* may be rendered *The I AM, God over all, blessed for evermore,* by way of Apposition: For the *Septuagint* have the same Word with the same Prepositive as a Translation of EHEJEH *Exod. iii. 14.* which signifies a Necessity of Essence and Existence, and the Phraseology is suitable to the Gospel Style, *Rev. i. 4.* *ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος*, and *ver. 8.* *ὁ ὢν*. None will pretend, that the Prepositive *ὁ* is relative, because if so, it would be in the Neuter Gender, which doth not quadrate. And if it were, it must be accented *ὁ* and not *ο*. The Text, when set in this Light, (which yet I submit to the Learned) is as expressive of the true and proper Deity of our Saviour, as 'tis possible for Words to express it, without the Necessity of changing *ὁ ὢν* into *ὁ εἰς*, or without any Variation of the Phrase whatsoever, or any Supplement made to it.

that God should deny his Justice, or remit of his Holiness, for such vile Worms as we are? certainly the sacred Rights of the injured Deity must be asserted and vindicated. There must be a Reparation of God's Honour by an equivalent Satisfaction. But how this should be accomplished! Here all created Minds would soon be at their Wits End! Since they could never have imagined, that God himself could, or, at least, would, make Satisfaction to God himself. It was then, the eternal Son of God said, *I come, to do thy Will.*

And as he hath said, lo, he hath done it! He hath actually found out an Entrance to Heaven, between the Wrath of God and the Sin of Man, and in a Way that greatly displays the Glory of Divine Mercy, Grace and Goodness. For did not Mercy interpose here, to rescue us, in the very Nick of Time, when we were on the very Brink of the Pit, whence there is no Redemption for ever? And was it not as far as even infinite Grace, or boundless Love itself could go, when God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all? Almighty Jehovah what could thou give us more than thy SELF! thy noble and Super-excellent SELF!

Again, the Contrivance is such, that tho' it raise Mercy to its highest Pitch of Glory; yet this is not done upon the Ruins of Holiness and Justice, but of all Ways possible is most for their Glory and Lustre: While 'tis made evident, that God's Hatred of Sin is carried as high as his Love to his own Son: And it appears, that the Stain of Sin is so deep, and the Vileness of Iniquity so great, that nothing but the Blood of God can expiate or purge it away. And again, that no Plea of Mercy can be heard in Prejudice to the Justice of God, which shews itself here in a Manner so astonishing, as begets in us more awful Veneration of God, than all the Shrieks and Yellings of the damned could raise in our Minds.

And

And again, when, as the Upshot of all this, Justice can now be look'd on, not as glooming with Threats, fenced with Terrors, or encompassed with lightning Flames; but tho' awful and venerable, yet serene, placid and accessible in Christ. And now, that 'tis visibly to be seen, how dazling Holiness and amiable Grace; how majestick Thundering Power and alluring Goodness, do all conspire, and infinitely set off one another, to the everlasting Admiration of Heaven! Is not this a Plot only fit for an infinite Mind! A Draught of Wisdom, as much above the Invention of Angels, as Infants! Yea, *Eph. iii. 10.* *Herein is made known, by the Church, unto Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, the manifold Wisdom of God; or as the Word πολυπικνια signifies, the Multiform or Variegated Wisdom of God; or that Wisdom of God, which is full of admirable Varieties.*

“ O! Angels! Archangels and Cherubims of Glory! were ye once thinking that Finite and Infinite could be unite together! That Eternity could be matched with Time! That the Creator and the Creature could make up one Person! Or, if such is your humble Deference to the Divine Wisdom, that the Possibility of this ye would not deny; yet did you imagine, that such an Union, in itself so incomprehensible, and which, tho' you should take Time (if such a Measure of Duration could possibly be in Eternity) to study, yet with all your piercing Capacity, you could not see through: Could you imagine, that such an Union as this, would be made with such a low Nature as ours! That is, not with Spirits pure, and such were of the highest Order, or chief Rank of the Creation; but with Spirits of a lower Class, and which were so meanly hous'd, as to dwell in Cottages of Clay! Yea, that the Union should be made, not only with Spirits dwelling in Flesh, but also with *Flesh* itself! Or, if even, when ye reckoned such a Dispensation

as this so very unlikely and improbable, that a
 Thought of it could scarce enter into your Heads;
 ye durst not after all, affirm it to be utterly im-
 possible: Yet could ye once conceive, that the
consubstantial Son of God would personally u-
 nite himsef with Dust, and ally himself to us;
 not when our Nature was in its pure and in-
 nocent State, but when miserably perverted, and
 made vile by Sin! Doth not such an Oecono-
 my, so very stupenduous, not only puzzle your
Thoughts, but outreach your *Admiration* itself?
 And if, in your further Searches into a Myste-
 ry ye can never fathom, ye shall see Him, who
 is your Lord and Head, dying! Him, who
 was Life itself parting with it! Him, who Thun-
 ders in the Heavens, slain by Men! If ye see the
 Perfections of Beauty enduring the Shame! The
 Excellency of Strength nailed to the Cross! The
 Almighty Jehovah suffering a painful Death!
 Doth not this dazle all your Apprehensions? and
 astonish Invention itself? And when further, ye
 have contemplated our great Redeemer, dying,
 as a Sacrifice for our Sins! And have beheld the
 Lord of Heaven and Earth, grappling with the Pow-
 ers of Hell! The Son of God's Love agonized
 with a Sense of his Father's Wrath! What are
 your Thoughts of this? Do you not find a Depth
 here ye cannot dive? And a Height ye cannot
 reach unto? Is not this a Myltery, broader than
 the Earth, and higher than the Heavens?

O! *All the Creation of God!* Attend with Asto-
 nishment into such an amazing Contrivance!
 Which, by its *unsearchableness*, manifests itself to
 be altogether *divine!* That He, who was in-
 throned in the Highest Bliss! Equal to God!
 And equally posselt of all God-like Excellencies,
 should come down among Men! And dwell in
 our Nature! And hereby cast a Vail upon his
 own Glorious Divinity! And that the final If-

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“*sure of all this should be, that the Divine Glory*
 “*shall shine with greater Effulgence, than ever*
 “*otherwise it could be seen by the Creature!*
 “*How comes this about? Infinite Glory, can't*
 “*not thou appear in thy Strength, till first thou*
 “*art eclipsed? Divine Lustre, could not thou shine,*
 “*till first thou wast hid? Ineffable Resplendency,*
 “*cannot thou be seen, till thou art veiled?*”

Here is a Knot, which no created Mind in Heaven, or in Earth could ever have loosed: Tho' no Question, when it is revealed, the loyal and dutiful Part of the Creation will all own, that all this is but like unto God, who hath other Rules to walk by than we: Who, tho' *He is Light, yet hath Clouds and Darknests round about him: Who makes Darknests his secret Place, and his Pavilion round about him.* And to whom 'tis a Thing very usual to command *Light to shine out of Darknests.* Yea, so far doth *Unsearchableness* belong to the very Being and peculiar Glory of God, that whether He describes himself as *covered with Light as with a Garment,* Psal. civ. or, as *having Darknests for his Covering,* Psal. xviii. They are Accounts of his Majesty of much the same Import. For when he is described as *Light,* yet 'tis such, as we cannot see, by Reason of so great *Glory:* Or, when He is described as *dwelling in Darknests,* yet 'tis so glorious, as that 'tis made *His Pavilion round about Him.* However it is, *Light inaccessible* could never be approached unto by weak Mortals, unless temper'd with *Darknests.* And *Light infinitely transparent* could never be seen, unless shining from the God-head on the Human Nature of Christ, and thence reflected on us. *

“And

* There were mystick Traditions in the ancient Philosophy significant to this purpose; as when they tell that *Wisdom* labouring to comprehend *Bullog* or the *P* ofundity of the divine Essence, was like to have lost itself, till it was help'd by *Ones.*

“ And O! *degenerate Mankind!* what say ye of
 “ this glorious and rich Device of the Son of God’s
 “ coming down in your Place and Room? and there-
 “ in answering all that *Justice* can demand of you,
 “ that he may perform all that *Mercy* and *Grace* can
 “ incline to you? Do not you own, that this is a
 “ Contrivance, at once very wonderful, and very
 “ taking? When ye see, that for all that Sin, or
 “ Hell, Death or Devils, can do, ye can be raised as
 “ high as Heaven: And when ye see what Advan-
 “ tage infinite Wisdom can take, even from our Sins
 “ and Unworthiness, our Necessities and Miseries,
 “ the Law and Justice, at once to glorify God, and
 “ exalt Men to even a greater Happiness, than what
 “ he had lost? Hath the blessed Son of God found
 “ out the Way of bringing Sons to God, from among
 “ the Vassals of *Satan*; Children of Light out of
 “ Darkness, and Heirs of Heaven from the Gates of
 “ Hell! O wonderful!

“ O! contrite and broken-hearted Sinners! What
 “ are your Thoughts of this Business? when ye be-
 “ hold, what (according to the wonderful Contri-
 “ vance of our Redemption) the eternal Son of God
 “ hath undertaken and done for you! Do not you
 “ see God dwelling *personally* in the human Na-
 “ ture; and that by coming to God, through the
 “ *Flesh* of your *Immanuel*, which is so nearly re-
 “ lated to God, and so nearly related to you, ye
 “ cannot miss your Steps in approaching near unto the
 “ divine Majesty? And do you not see, that God can
 “ now save you, *sinful* as you are, in a Way of Ho-
 “ nour to his Holiness and Justice? So that no Com-
 “ petition can now remain between his Glory and
 “ your Happiness; but ye may ground your Hope,
 “ not only on the Promises and Faithfulness, but on
 “ the very Being and Glory of God. O wonder-
 “ ful! Who could have lookt for such a Thing as
 “ this, if it had not been revealed! And who can
 “ look enough to it, now that it is!

“ Do

“ Do ye see, instead of the terrible Views of un-
 “ pardoned Guilt, a God reconcileable in Christ,
 “ and holding him forth a Propitiation for Sins,
 “ and that accordingly by Faith ye receive Remissi-
 “ on of Sins? Do ye find, instead of the noisome
 “ Impurities in your Hearts, where never any Thing
 “ holy, nor any Thing pure, nor any Thing plea-
 “ sant had before lighted, that now the Spirit hath
 “ descended upon you, to enlighten, enliven, puri-
 “ fy and comfort your Souls? And whereas before,
 “ Death and the Shadows of everlasting Darknesh
 “ hover over your Heads, the Fear of which made
 “ you pale like Death, and grim like Hell: Do ye
 “ now see, that Jesus Christ your Lord, according
 “ to the eternal Compact between the Father and Him,
 “ hath by Death given Death its deadly Wounds,
 “ hath gone into the Land of Destruction, and van-
 “ quished it in its own Soil? O rare Contrivance!
 “ O amazing Wisdom! What Thoughts doth
 “ this raise in your Minds! What Emotions of
 “ Heart! and what Tides of Admiration over-
 “ flow and overwhelm the Soul, at every Thought
 “ here! ”

Secondly, *We preach Christ the Wisdom of God in the gradual Manifestations of his redeeming Grace to the lapsed Posterity of Man*, Heb. 11. He appeared in the first Ages only as a Morning Star; afterwards as the Dawning of the Day; And last of all, as the Sun shining in his full Strength. *Mal. iv. 2.* First, there were only obscure Hints, yet sufficient to point him out; And then more apparent Discoveries. And, lastly, the actual Exhibition of Christ in the Flesh.

That there was a Saviour promised in the *Old Testament*, and that such an extraordinary Person was expected by the *Jews*, is evident by all Manner of Proofs, and as great Strength and Clearness of Argument, as any Fact (for in this View it comes under the Notion of a Fact) is capable of. What clearer Vouchers can we possibly desire in the Argument,

than

than the sacred Oracles of the *Jews*, and the Glosses of all their *Dottors*?

As to their sacred Records, What else could they mean by *the Seed of the Woman's breaking the Head of the Serpent*? (a) How otherwise were all Nations of the Earth blessed in Abraham? (b) What other Person could they call *David's Lord*? (c) Or did they think it was *David* that saw no Corruption, (d) when his Sepulchre was with them till *Christ's Day*? (e) Could they think that the Promises made to *David*, That his Throne should be as the Days of Heaven, and established for ever as the Sun and Moon, (f) were restricted to a temporal Kingdom, when an everlasting Coverant is also made, and the sure Mercies of *David* in it, with all that incline their Ear and come unto God? (g) Could they possibly conceit, that all and every one of the obedient were to be temporal Kings, and their Posterity after them, to all Generations? Much less be all Kings over *Israel*. Again, what could they understand by a *Virgin's* conceiving and bearing a Son, whose Name was to be called *Immanuel*? (h) Could they think that this was meant of an ordinary Conception? Where would be the Wonder of this? What Occasion was there for all the Solemnity, **THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU A SIGN?** Why such a solemn Notice commanded in the Word **BEHOLD**? Who can imagine, that when

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(a) Gen. iii. 15. (b) Gen. xviii. 18. (c) Psal. cx. 1.
(d) Psal. xvi. 10. (e) Act. ii. 29. (f) Psal. lxxx ix. 36,
37. (g) Isa. lv. 3.

* ALMA is translated *παρθενος* a Virgin by the Septuagint Version, the oldest Version of the Old Testament, being 300 Years before there was any Controversy between the *Jews* and Christians. And so did the most ancient *Rabbins* among the *Jews* also translate it. The Word signifies *hidden* from the Custom of Eastern Nations, in keeping their Daughters, while Virgins, retired from publick Company.

(h) Isa. vii. 14.

the Prophet proposed to *Ahaz*, to ask him a Sign, either in the Depth below, or in the Height above, that is, either to the dividing of the Sea, or the causing of the Sun to stand still; that yet the Prophet in the Name of God, and after so much Pomp and Address, should offer a Thing so ordinary and low, as could scarce rouse up the Attention, much less be a Sign of any great Event? Or, was there a Possibility of doubting in the Matter, when 'tis told so expressly of this very Son given, and of this Child born, *Isa. ix. 6. That His Name should be called wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace?* How can it be applied to *Hezekiah*, that He was the Son promised to be born, *Isa. vii. 14.* when He was born nine or ten Years before? For, *Ahaz* reigned but sixteen Years, and *Hezekiah* was twenty-five Years old, when he began to reign. Or, How could it be applied to *Isaiah's* Son, that the Land of *Israel* should be called his Land, as being the *Immanuel* promised, *Isa. viii. 8. And that of the Increase of his Government there should be no End, and that He should sit upon the Throne of his Father David,* as we have it *Isa. ix. 7?* Or, How was it applicable to any of them, or to any Creature else, that His Name should be called *The Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace,* as we have it, *Isa. ix. 6?* Again, what other Governor could they expect from *Beithlehem Ephratah*, whose Outgoings have been of old, even from the Days of Eternity, *Mic. v. 2?* And whom could they imagine to be *Messiah the Prince*, *Dan. ix. 25. MESSIAH NAGHID the Prince or Chief Messiah, or the Messiah* that was to be manifested? And if the *seventy Weeks* of Years, or four hundred and ninety Years shall commence from the going forth of the Commandment to build and restore *Jerusalem*, as 'tis determined by *Daniel*, in the foresaid Place, and have their Beginning from the Commission given by *Ar-*

taxerxes Longimanus to *Ezra*, as we have it, *Ezra* vii. 7. Then this Prophecy, in all the Parts of it, is so literally fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*, as some have made the very Clearness of the Prophecy an Obstacle to their Belief of the same. But I cannot stay upon this.

Can we crave any greater Evidence of the Faith and Expectation of the *Jews*, than their own Books sacred and common? The *seventy* translate SHADDAI (the undoubted Name of God) into *αὐτός*, *Ezek.* i. 28. The *Chaldaick Paraphrase* frequently hath MIMRAH for God himself, which *Philo* renders *αὐτός*. And to shew that he understands it personally, he calls it *Περισσὸν Θεῶν*. Yea there is not an Author extant among the *Jews*, however they differ as to his Person, or Character, but what declare their Faith and Expectation of the *Messias*. And some of their famous *Rabbins* tell, it was the ancient Doctrine of all the Doctors. And again, these that were Enemies both to *Jews* and Christians, confess this was the Faith of that Nation, as *Celsus* the Epicurean, *Suetonius*, &c.

Here it would be pleasant to observe, if the Matter were not grave and weighty, all the *Jews* of whom there is any Thing extant, affirming their Faith in the *Messias*, and the *Heathens* denying they had such a Faith. The *Jews* asserting this was the Doctrine of all their Ancestors before them, and the *Heathens* denying they maintained such a Doctrine. The ancient *Heathens* confessing this was the old Faith and Expectation of the *Jews*, and the modern *Heathens* denying the same. I should think, if this could have been denied with any good Grace, or with the least Measure of Shamefacedness, it would have been most proper for Adversaries in the first Ages of Christianity. But the Evidence of this was too glaring then to be denied; and therefore, 'tis reserved for one of the poor and last Shifts of modern Infidels. But, why so? Why, when pinched, do you force yourselves into so many Absurdities? When will the gloomy

Cause of Infidelity require the half of your Pains? Will it do it in Life? Or at Death? Or after Death, among the dark Shades below? But what Virtues what Point of Morality can your Infidelity serve for in Life? What Comfort can it yield you in Death? Or what Prospect can it afford you beyond Death? And a total Extinction thou canst not so much as wish for, till thou hast first shaken off the Principles engrained in the human Nature, as well as renounced the Christian Religion.

But what we are observing, as of greater Importance, is the infinite *Wisdom* of God, in the gradual Manifestation of our Redemption, by a *God incarnate*. Hereby all the Threeds of this divine Contexture are more leisurely, and more accurately look'd into: The several Parts of which are a Scene of Contemplation and Admiration. And there is Time hereby to consider each Part and Pendicle of this mysterious Contrivance, without being too much dazzled, or altogether confounded. Had the whole Face of this deep and astonishing *Mystery* been presented at once in full View, then, as the *Israelites* could not behold *Moses* his Face by Reason of its *Glory*, till a Vail was cast upon it; so the Brightness of this amazing Dispensation would have so transcended the Capacity of weak Mortals, as that they could not see, by Reason of so great a *Light*. Hereby there is let out a gradual Manifestation, corresponding to the gradual Improvement of our Faculties: A thing that seems not incompatible with the State of *Comprehensors* in Heaven, much less the State of *Viators* on Earth. For now, saith the Apostle, *Eph. xi. 10. unto Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, is made known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God*. And who, that considers what God is, or how weak our Minds are, can conceive, that any, even the most noble of all Creatures, can take in *All* of God, and his Works, at the first Glance? And may not a Being, boundless and infinite in all possible

possible Excellencies, administer further and further Discoveries infinitely and endlessly?

Again, by this gradual and various Manifestation of our Redeemer, there is seen that infinite Variety that holds in all the Works of God, as the Expression of his exuberant Power, Wisdom and Goodness: And which will be an agreeable and eternal Entertainment to all noble and contemplative Minds. Will it not add to the Contemplation and Satisfaction of excellent and well-affected Souls, to behold not only the Grace revealed, but the various Modes, Ways and Degrees of its Revelation? Not only Things themselves, but the Connexion of Things, furnish an agreeable Employment to searching and active Souls. Is it not a new Pleasure to see the fit Relation between the *Type* and the *Antitype*? And the exact Correspondence between the Promise and the Accomplishment of the Promise? And all the several Connexions between Events and Events, which appeared many Time to us to be altogether disjointed, or full of mysterious Intricacy? And hereby the Lord keeps up that STATE that becomes him, as the Sovereign and Ruler of Men: For being Master of his own Grace, to give it, when, to whom, and in what Measure he pleases: He gives it so gradually, that such *Things* as we are, may not only mind we are *Creatures*, but also that we are *Sinners*. It was on this Account he thought fit to train up the *Jews*, for some Time, under a strict and severe Pedagogy. And what Aspect would it have to the Angels that never offended? Or, how would it look to those Sons of the Morning, if a Multitude of those, who in their first and best Estate, were Beings of a lower Form than they, and now by Sin had precipitated themselves as low as the Beasts that perish, if they should all at once, arrive to a full View of all the Mysteries of a *God incarnate*? when they themselves disdain not to be Scholars, and Students of that Mystery to this very Day, 1 *Pet.* i. 12. and *Eph.* iii. 10.

And hereby again, we are led to the grateful Study, not only of the divine Providence towards the Church of God, in all the several Ages and Forms thereof; but to observe also how the Wheels of Providence turn upon the rest of the World: So that a new Scene of Wonders opens itself to our View. How not only the Lord preserves his People, but also how he deals with their Enemies, and by innumerable Ways, thwarts, defeats and over-rules them. And these, and such like Providences, as they magnify the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God on Earth, so also they accent the Praises and heighten the *Hallelujahs* in Heaven, as may be seen, Rev. ii. and 12. and 14 and 15 Chapters.

Thirdly, We preach *Christ the Wisdom of God*, in the Choice of the Persons that were at first to promulgate the News of the Redemption purchased by him. Had Politicians, Philosophers and spruce Orators been the first Broachers of the Christian Religion, and the illiterate Vulgar their Followers, natural Suspicion and Incredulity might have suggested, that all was but an artful Contrivance, or a State Policy, being in the Hands of such as might be Masters both of the Design and Execution. But being preached by a few illiterate Men, that had no Weapon to combat the Gentile Philosophy, nor the Jewish Bigotry; nor any Motive to support themselves, in any Attempt so very difficult and dangerous, as the overthrowing all the established Religions on Earth, no possible Jealousy of their Sincerity can be left us. That a few unlearned Men, by preaching the despised Doctrine of the Cross, with plain Simplicity, should confound all the learned Wights of the World, and more prevail upon the Hearts of Men, tho' prepossessed with contrary Principles, and contrary Pleasures, than they could do with all the Lectures of Philosophy. This shews *Christ* to be the *Wisdom of God*, and demonstrates what follows in the Verse next our Text, *that the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, We preach Christ the Wisdom of God, in his Designation of the Persons to be saved. Had they been only or mainly the Rich of the World, then Riches might have been thought to be among God's best Gifts, as being a Mean or a Qualification for Grace and Glory; and then they might have been over-valued, or rather they could never have been enough valued: And then again, the Means and the End here would be altogether inconsistent, since 'tis the Design and Effect of Grace to call us from the World, raise our Spirits above it, and cause us deny and crucify the same. Or, had they been only, or mainly the Wise of the World, then our Faith had been founded, rather on the *Wisdom of Man, than* *than the Power of God*; at least but a small Difference would have been reckoned, between the Attainments of Reason and the Discoveries of Faith. But that Christ should generally call *the Poor of the World to be rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom*; hereby he stains the Pride and Glory of Man; he poses his Intellectuals, and makes it appear, that the Excellency of the Wisdom, as well as of the Power, is only of God.

Fifthly, We preach Christ to be the Wisdom of God, in the great and final End of the Redemption he hath purchased, which is, 2 Theff. i. 10. That God in Christ may be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. And any End lower than this would be unworthy of divine Wisdom. It appears indeed to be an idle Question, Whether the *Glory of God*, or the *Enjoyment of him*, as our chief Happiness, be Man's chief End, because this is to abstract a Thing from itself? For the honouring God as our Lord, and the Enjoyment of him as our Happiness, are not two Acts: Or, at least they are so intimately interwoven, that they run through one another. We glorify God by enjoying him: Being that the Glory due to God, is to make him our chief Joy and our eternal Excellency. And we again enjoy God, by glorifying him:

Since

Since all Acts, whereby God is honoured, naturally turn the Powers of the Soul upon him, and lead to Communion with him. And it cannot be otherwise in the Nature of the Thing. For, if the Glory of God be not our chief Delight, it is not our chief End: And where it is our chief Delight, it is also our chief Happiness.

Yet to represent the all-wise and almighty God to have any End lower than himself, and his own Glory, would be injurious to him, and unbecoming his infinite Majesty.

'Tis not true, that the main Design of Religion is, that, by *social Virtues*, we should be serviceable and useful to one another. Let us suppose one very careful in what are called social Virtues. What does he? He provides his Neighbours with the Comforts of this Life, but is this in Subserviency to a future Life? If not, what's his ultimate View, but that his Neighbour may live as an Animal of Pleasure? And if it be in Subserviency to a future State, there is an higher View in this, than the ministring to our Neighbour's Necessities: Unless one should think there were such Necessities, and a Supply of such Necessities, in the other World. Or, perhaps it will be said, he is improving his Neighbour in Temperance, Meekness, Patience, &c. But again, is this to prepare his Neighbour for the pure Enjoyments in Heaven, consisting in seeing God's Face, beholding his Glory, and in loving, adoring and praising him for ever and ever? If so, his Views go higher than social Virtues; 'tis the Glory of God that is mainly intended, and the Man's Happiness is placed in the Enjoyment of God. If, on the other hand, thou hast no other Design but to teach thy Neighbour, how with the greatest Ease and Tranquillity, he may enjoy his earthly and sensual Pleasures: This *Epicurus* himself thought necessary for the heightening and perfecting of his sensual Happiness. Or, it may be, thou sayest, thou art instructing thy Neighbour in useful Sciences.

Useful,

Useful, for what? Are they useful to make a Soul be-
have like itself, or as an intelligent Being, designed
for the Enjoyments of an intellectual World, or for
the forming an immortal Spirit, for the full Vision of
God, and Communion with him in Glory, which is
the total Sum of our Happiness? If so, thou hast a
Design that goes higher than social Virtues, as such,
and which gives *Morality* to them, viz. A supreme
Respect to the Glory and Enjoyment of God. On the
other hand, if these Instructions reach no higher,
than a Man's Utility, and Profit in this Life, 'tis evi-
dent, thou designest no more to make a good *Animal*
of thy Neighbour.

In short, we love and serve God either, chiefly for
his *spiritual*, or chiefly for his *temporal Blessings*. If
we love and serve him chiefly for his spiritual Bles-
sings; that is, for Pardon, Sanctification, Communi-
on with himself, &c. The plain Sense of this is, we
would be freed from the Curse of the Law, which
withholds the Spirit of God from our Souls, and we
would be like unto God, and conform to his moral
Excellencies: We would see his Face, and enjoy his
Favour: And so it is God *himself* that is the ultimate
Term of all our Designs and Motions. Or, we love
and serve God chiefly for a temporal Felicity. If so,
temporal Things will be the formal Reason, or chief
Ground of our Love to God; and so they are loved
more than God, at least equally with him. And
where lies the Virtue or Morality of this? Can that
be a moral Act, which is not suited to the Nature of
the Object? or bears not some Proportion to the
various and gradual Excellencies of the Objects it is
conversant about? For a Man to love his Friend no
otherwise, than he loves his Beast, would this be a
moral Act of Love? Hence, supreme Love to God
must be the first Beginning of all true Morality, be-
ing that which specifies, Qualifies, and regulates all
moral Acts. For herein lies the *Good* of every good
Action, the Reference it hath to our chief Good.

If it be said again, these temporal Benefits are neither the formal Reason, nor the chief Cause of our Love to God, but only the *Arguments* and *Motives* exciting us to contemplate, love, and admire his amiable and ravishing Excellencies, so that 'tis God himself our Love mainly and ultimately Terminates upon. This is just saying what we are now proving, that the Glory of God is his own chief End, and should also be ours.

So far as we regard the Scriptures of Truth, we will find ourselves under an unavoidable Necessity of thinking, that to be known, loved, imitated, depended upon, praised, admired, is God's great End in planting Religion, and making moral Agents capable of it. That as it is his Glory to have a world of Creatures hanging upon him, and celebrating his infinite Excellencies, so he takes Pleasure in this: Which yet is not to make our Acts his chief End, but his own Perfections as terminate upon by us. *He takes Pleasure in his Saints, (a) rejoices over Zion, (b) and rests in Love to his People (c):* And, if perhaps we find Difficulty in reconciling such a Thing in God, with some of our Notions concerning the divine Nature, shall we for this deny these Things in him? Shall we for what we have thought of God, deny what he hath expressly said of himself? Or, because these Things are not the same in God as in us, will we deny there is any Thing in God correspondent to these Accounts he hath given of himself? We cannot but think, that as God takes infinite Satisfaction in his own *Essence*, so also in his own *Operations*. His glorious Decrees and Contrivances cannot but be satisfying to him. When his *Countenance beholdeth the upright*, it cannot but be pleasing. Should a Man confess only the Religion of Nature, he must own that it was an Act of Pleasure in God to make the World. Yet let us still mind, that the Lord needs not go out of himself for Pleasure: 'Tis from his

(a) *Psal.* 149. 4. (b) *Zeph.* 3. 17. (c) *ibid.*

own Attributes and Perfections shining in his Works, that his Delight results.

How surprising is it to find some of our late *Authors*, giving more than a Hint, that if God made his Glory his chief End; or could be delighted with the Praises of his rational Creatures, this would be to represent him, as having vain Glory for his End, or as one pleased with empty Praises. I suppose it would be to little Purpose to reprove Men that speak after this Fashion from the Word of God, we must bring them to the Bar of Reason. If God should eternally delight and glory in the Fulness of Being and Perfection there is in himself: Or, if he should take Pleasure in the real Acknowledgment of this, by his rational Creatures; 'tis said by these Men, the one would be *Selfishness* and vain Glory, and the other *empty Praises*. And why so? To be sure it must be, because it would be Selfishness and vain Glory in Man to boast of his own Excellencies; and nothing but his Pride can be soothed by the Applause of his Fellow-creatures. But who sees not, that when speaking of God, the reverse of all this is true? Why is it vain Glory in Man? The Exility and Meanness of the *Object* cannot admit of it: There is not *Worth* to bear it out: Both the Subject and the Object of the Glory is *Vanity*: He wants a *Sufficiency* to support it: His *Self* is set up in Opposition to God, on whom he depends for his *All*: His Glory is derogatory to the Glory of God: 'Tis a denying God his Due, and usurping to himself more than what is his: And the Applauses and Acclamations of his Fellow-creatures make it no better, but more increase the Vanity. But, if the Creature may not glory in *nothing*, may not God glory in his own *Fulness*, and in the University of Perfection there is in himself? What could he delight and glory in from Eternity, but his own glorious *Self*? How impious as well as absurd must it be, to think it so much as possible, that he should *over-estimate* himself, or be *over-conceited* of his

own infinite Excellencies? And is there not an eternal *moral Fitness* in the rational Creature's giving to its Creator the Glory due to his Name? Yea, suppose thou wert none of God's Creatures, would it not be morally, and eternally fit, to commend the *best* of Beings, to take notice of the best Excellencies, to admire them, and be suitably affected with them? Are these Praises empty and vain? Do they not shew, that there is a due Proportion in our *Ideas*, and without which there would be an Untruth and Disproportion in them? Is it not morally fit to think and tell the *Truth* of God? That he is a *Being* so immensely and incomprehensibly Perfect, as that it would take a long, long Eternity to sound his Praises? which if denied him, then farewell *supreme Love to him*, and all the *servent Desires*, whereby the Soul stretches itself with a Kind of *Infiniteness* towards him; and all the *noble, boundless Affections*, which, tho' not proportional, yet are in some sort correspondent to his infinite Excellencies; and which make Heaven to be Heaven. But, suppose there were no Heaven, yet what generous Soul would chuse to be either so *stupid*, as not to see God's infinite Excellencies; or so *wicked*, as not to admire and praise them, when seen? For not to acknowledge God, is to deny him; and to acknowledge him, without loving, praising and admiring him, would be devilish Wickedness.

Sixthly, *We preach Christ the Wisdom of God, in his instituting apt Means of Grace.* That the Lord hath appointed a Course of Means; That he worketh Grace in the Soul ordinarily, in the Use of Means; that these Means are suitable to the Nature of a rational Soul; and that they prosper best in Grace, who are most diligent in the Use of Means, are Truths uncontestable. But, what is the Connexion between *Grace* and the *Means* of Grace, is not so easie to determine. Some think it enough to say, That where God bestows the greatest Plenty of Means, there may be expected the greatest Share of Heaven's Influences.

fluences. Some again say, There is a Promise of Grace made to him that does as well as he can in the Use of Means. But where to find the Man, who does as well as he can, will be the great Difficulty; every one's Conscience and Experience testifying he is not the *Man*. For tho' it be certain, that the Unregenerate cannot *repent, believe, turn unto God and live*; yet the immediate Reason why they do not repent, believe, &c. is not because they *cannot*, (tho' 'tis most certain they cannot) but because they *will not*, John v. 40. They will not try how far their Powers can go: And so their Impotence is both physical and moral; and, in both Respects, total and incurable.

But what I observe here of the Wisdom of Christ in this Particular, is, that the Means, tho' not *formally*, yet *materially*, are of the same Nature with the End. I think none can mistake me when I say, *materially*; It is so, since 'tis the Form only that specifies the Action (as the Schools speak). I shall illustrate this in a few Particulars.

The first I mention is *Prayer*. Doth not the very Sum and Substance of Religion ly in the Submission of the Soul unto God, Dependence on him, Conformity to him, Confidence in him, and the Ascent of the Heart towards him? And is not all this in the very Nature of Prayer? 'Tis a Mistake to call Prayer only a subservient Duty, as if it were not so much Religion, as a Mean of Religion. Is it not an Act of Adoration, and of Submission to the Great God; the Soul's immediate Hanging on the Lord, and its most earnest Desire for the most intimate Nearness and Conformity to him? All which will be eternally the pious Exercises of the Saints above; and which naturally arise from their moral Relation to God.

Again, another Mean is God's *Word* read, heard and meditated upon. And what is Regeneration, but the Inscription of God's Law in the Heart? Regene-

rating Grace is the Finger of God writing his Word, and engraving it by his Spirit on the immortal Mind of Man; as that there is something in him correspondent to every Part of the Word, and something in every Part of him that is so correspondent. Here then is the Wisdom of Christ in appointing Means of Grace that materially run into Grace.

Seventhly, *We preach Christ the Wisdom of God, in appointing the Grace of Faith to be the Instrument of our Justification*, To that Sinners shall be justified in the Way of believing in Christ and his Righteousness, *Rom. iii. 22.* and *v. 1. Gal. ii. 16.* Yea, what other Way was possible? Thou hast no original, no essential Righteousness, none but what is derived, dependent and communicated: And canst thou obtain a dependent Righteousness, without depending upon it? Or a communicated Righteousness, without receiving it? 'Tis true, it is a gifted, imputed Righteousness, wherewith we are justified. But what if it be? Is it the less acceptable to God, that 'tis his own Gift? Or hast thou the less Warrant to receive it, because held out to thee by his own Hand? *Rom. iii. 25.* As thou art a Creature, if ever thou be justified, it must be by a gifted Righteousness. For what hast thou, O Man; nay, O Angel, O Archangel, but what thou hast received? And as thou art a Sinner, it must be doubly given, that is, given to one, who is both *Undeserving* and *Hell-deserving*, else no Flesh living could be justified. But, if neither carnal Reason can understand, nor a proud Will can stoop to an imputed Righteousness; yet, at least, thou must own thy Righteousness, whatever it is, to be gifted; since a Creature Righteousness not given is a plain Contradiction. Again, thou must confess, that there is no Proportion between thy temporary Obedience and an eternal Reward: And that by paying what is due, much less when thou comest short infinitely, thou dost not merit eternal Life and Happiness. Hence, if this Righteousness of thine give a Right to Heaven's Happiness, there is some Kind of Imputa-

Imputation in it: 'Tis estimated, and we are dealt with as if it gave a Right to Life, when in itself it does not. What is then the great Odds between an imputed and an inherent Righteousness, since both are given, and an inherent Righteousness cannot give Right to Life eternal, without a gracious Estimate? Only the Gospel-way of justifying Sinners hath this Advantage and Security, which every thoughtful Soul finds he needeth, that a real perfect Righteousness is interponed, sufficient in itself, to give all that believe in the same, a Right to Life and Happiness, without any Wrong done to any Party concerned in the Business. There is no Wrong, ye are sure, done to the Person justified, when he is righted in the most obliging Manner possible. No Wrong is done unto God, the Judge of all the Earth, when his most sacred Rights are asserted more vigorously, and vindicated in a more awful and astonishing Manner, than if all Mankind had been hurled into Hell. And at the same time, his God-like Goodness shines with such Brightness, as strikes Heaven into eternal Rapture. And no Wrong is done to our Mediator, since he submitted voluntarily, had a Right to dispose of himself, and a Power to elude from under his Sufferings; and hereby also hath acquired a new superveening Right, whereby, as he is *God incarnate*, he is *Lord over all*.

And the receiving of this Righteousness, and the resting on it by *Faith*, tho' it is a positive Institution, and the Efficacy of Faith is from the Divine Word, yet it is so naturally founded upon our present Posture and Relation to God, that I conceive it even goes to Heaven with a Man. I know it is sometimes said, That the Grace of Faith goes to Heaven's Threshold with the Believer, and there it leaves him for ever. But I suppose what they intend is only, that all the Darkness and Imperfection there is in our Faith, then ceaseth; or that such an obscure and imperfect Faith as ours, then leaves a Man, when he arrives in Heaven; where there is a greater Clearness, Certainty

and Satisfaction in all its Acts. For I cannot think that the Believer will leave his Faith, or any Grace else behind him, when he enters into Heaven. How could it be said, that Grace and Glory differ not in their Kind, if what is essential to the one, be totally destitute in the other? And what Security have the glorified Saints for the Eternity of their Happiness, (for a Birth-right to it they have none) but their Faith in the Promises and Faithfulness of God? But this is not all I am now meaning, I humbly conceive, that all the Redeemed of the Lord will humbly depend upon Christ, and apply his Merit and Satisfaction, as their only Right to Life and Happiness, through all the possible Moments of Eternity. The Saints in Heaven will never desire to stand on their own Strength, nor seek to have all their Stock of Grace in their own Hands: But through all Eternity will own they need a *Day's man*. What! will they not own the Necessitousness and Dependence, which are ingrained in them, as they are Creatures, and the Folly they were chargeable with as Sinners? Will not the very Angels, when God charges them with Folly,* take with the Charge, and think their greatest Safety lies in scugging themselves under the Wings of our Mediator, *Eph. i. 10.*

'Tis true, 'tis said, *Here we see through a Glass, but then Face to Face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But should these Metaphors be urged, even to a philosophical Nicety, they do but the more confirm what we are saying; since 'tis the same Object, and by the same Rays, that we see in a Mirror, and Face to Face: The only Difference being, that in seeing Face to Face, the Rays come in a more direct Line, whereas, in a Mirror or Glass, they take a greater Compass in the Way of Refraction.

And I dare say, such a Thought as this will raise no ungrateful *Idea* of Heaven in any holy and well-affected Soul. Heaven will not be the less Heaven, that

* i. e. Mutability and Defectibility.

that the Ransomed of the Lord prostrate themselves there at their Redeemer's Feet, and own, with Humility and Thankfulness, that they hold their All of him, and under him. I believe rather they would think something wanting in Heaven, if this were not in it. What, Sirs! will it not be eternally and rapturously pleasant to be owning and confessing your Dependence on the great Redeemer, and your immense Obligations to his Grace? Do not the Glorified do what becomes them, when they cast down their Crowns before the Lamb, and him that sits on the Throne? *Rev. iv. 10.* And is it not this, and the like of this that begets in them eternal Trances, Raptures, Extracies, &c? As may be seen in their Songs and Hallelujahs in the *Book of the Revelation*.

What I design by this, is to shew, That however this Justification by Faith in Christ's Righteousness, may be evil spoken of by some, yet 'tis a Constitution so wise, as suits both Heaven and Earth, I had almost said, Angels as well as Men.

Eightly, *We preach Christ the Wisdom of God, in his appointing Faith to be the Condition of the Covenant of Grace*, *Mark xvi. 16. Acts xvi. 31.* Perhaps this may be a Way of speaking, not very agreeable to some sound Divines, tho' where the real Difference lies between them and other sound Divines, in this particular Question, I am not able to perceive. 'Tis owned by all, that what is required is also promised, that even the very first Grace is the Fruit of Christ's Purchase, and is of free Gift: That Christ giveth not only the Principle of spiritual Action, but the Excitement of that Principle, yea the very Act itself, *Phil. ii. 13.* That tho' the whole Efficiency of Grace is from Christ, yet the Acts of Grace are from a Believer in a vital formal Manner. That there is no Merit in Faith, either *ex pacto*, or any way else: That yet Faith interesteth the Sinner in Christ. What now can be the Difference? Why, one, by Condition, means that which founds his Right to Life; and another,

ther, that which God requireth as a Mean to inter-
rest the Sinner in Christ, and so bring him within
the Bond of the Covenant. The Difference then lies
so intirely in the Meaning of a Word, that a Man,
upon changing the Sense of Terms, must necessarily
change his Side in the Question.

And, O! how admirably is the Grace of Faith fit-
ted for the Business! For besides that it plunges the
Soul into deep and Heart melting Repentance: If the
strongest Impressions of awful Terror, or the most
significant Demonstrations of the most intense and
astomishing Love, can do any thing to the rending
or dissolving a Heart of Stone; and besides, that 'tis
a self-denying Grace, causing the Soul to shrink as
into a Point, and to evanish, as it were, before the
Lord, and the Glory of his Grace: Besides all this,
the very formal Nature of Faith lies in its *Recepti-*
bility and Dependence. "I have nothing to give unto
God, says the contrite Soul, and what can I do
unto him? But may I not receive his offered Mer-
cy, and depend on his Promise thereof? Worth I
cannot, but to beg and to receive too, at the
Throne of Grace, I need not be ashamed." And
so the Covenant of Grace is held forth to us, and
proposed in Terms, that suit wonderfully both the
Glory of God, and the Necessities of Men.

This Gospel-method of Salvation, through Faith,
is a Constitution so rational and wise, that suppose a
Deist should hope for Salvation, from the Principles of
natural Religion, it must be in such a Way, as is but a
faint Imitation of the Gospel-scheme. There must be
a Belief of the Divine Mercy, and a resting on it, as
the only Thing that can save him. A Creature, if
knowing itself, cannot be much conceited of his own
Merit; far less can a sinful Creature have the least
Hopes, but in the Mercy of God. Dost thou own
thy self to have sinned, and that there is no less in
every Sin, than a contesting with God about *Sove-*
reignty; and a preferring any thing in the World,
yea

yea the worst Thing in it, to the infinitely perfect Being, who is the Author of all Goodness? Hast thou a Sense of this? (and stupid thou art if thou hast not) This will lay thee low, and prostrate thee at God's Feet in Contrition, Humiliation and Self-abasement. And thou wilt own thy Need of Mercy, and be altogether hopeless, unless thou can believe and rest upon the same. Well, Mercy thou believest; and it may be, thou thinkest of amending thy Life: For thou canst not think it fit to be said unto God, "Lord have Mercy upon me, tho' I have no Mind to honour thee; or, tho' I am resolved to affront thee. Or, Lord have Mercy upon me, tho' I think nothing to despise thee and thy most sacred Will: Or, tho' I repent not that ever I did Evil, but I am resolved to do Evil before thee continually." Certainly thou knowest, that nothing can be spoken more undecently to a holy God; and that thou canst not set thy Face to the Heavens with such a Prayer in thy Lips. What then? thy Prayer must be, "Lord have Mercy upon me, for I am broken in Spirit for Sin; it repents me to the Heart that ever I did Evil in thy Sight; and wherein I have done Iniquity, I will do so no more." And shall we suppose this to be thy Case? Or, is it a Thing easily supposable in thee? How can one repent of his Sins, without a supreme Love to God, and a cleaving to him above all Things? Can he hate Sin as the worst of Evils, who loves not God as the best of Beings? And how can a Notion of Mercy ingeneral, without a clear and satisfying View, how Mercy and Truth may meet together, and Righteousness and Peace kiss each other, conciliate true Respect to God; or command the Homage that is due to him? Let us suppose God to be all Mercy, and so taking down the Partition-wall between Heaven and Hell, and making one Event and one Place to the Holy and to the Unholy, to the Godly and to the Profane: How effectually would this stifle all Affection

fection to God, and cast off all Reverence to his Name? Which Reverence and which Love are the total Sum both of our Duty and Happiness, being the correspondent Impression in us of his God-like Excellencies.

But let us suppose, that thou doest truly amend, and that thou sinnest no more for the Time to come: Yet what doest thou say, as to thy bypast Sins? Sin being Treason against the King of Heaven, thereby a new Obligation is contracted, *viz.* to suffer condign Punishment; the former Obligation to Duty remaining eternally in its full Force: And canst thou think that by one Debt, thou canst pay another? Or didst thou never hear of a Divine NEMESIS, a *Divine**, enough to confound thy Hope? Or, what Ground hast thou for this Faith of thine in the Mercy of God, when thou refuseth to read it in his Word, and canst not read it in his Works, there being no such Discrimination in the eternal Aspect of Divine Providence, between the Good and the Evil, as is congruous to the final State, either of the one or the other, or can so much as make us guess about the same?

Yet Mercy, thou sayest, thou dependest upon, and thou takest thy Chance of it, and when Death comes, thou jumps into the Dark, thou knowest not whither. But what a listless Worshipper of God wilt thou be all this while? (and Devotion thou wilt not think needless, unless thou can imagine, that God hath dropped thee down on this Earth, to overlook himself; or to bind thee more close to thy Fellow-creatures than to him, on whom thou dependest for thine *All*) I say, how cold, and heartless wilt thou be in all thy devotional Exercises, when thou runnest so *uncertainly*, and *fightest but as one beating the Air*, neither knowing what thou owest to God, or what thou mayest expect from him? And where hast thou a Discovery of the Nature and State of thy future Hap-

* *Act* xxviii. 4.

Happiness? Without which, how dost thou know by what Dispositions thou canst prepare thy Soul for the same? Would not any Attempt this Way be as one walking without eyeing a Mark; or moving without a Term of Motion?

Ye are heartily welcome to take as much as you please from the *sacred Records*, to form in your Minds right Conceptions of God, and also of a future State. And in the *Name of God*, take also the Way therein chalk'd out unto eternal Life. This would be more generous, than after you have lighted your Candle at the Light of divine Revelation, to go about to extinguish the same.

My Design in all this, as I have told, is to shew, that the Gospel-way of obtaining Favour with God through *Faith*, is so naturally and rationally founded, that even these, who set up only for the Religion of *Nature*, seek Acceptance with God, in some sort, according to this very *plan*; tho' their Religion is defective, not only as it discovers, not so clearly, the glorious Excellencies of God; but also as it manifests not sufficient Grounds to support Hope, nor Light enough to guide us in Duty.

In short, as the *Christian* perceives in himself immediately an immortal Spirit, or a Substance that is not only simple and indivisible, and hence indissoluble, but also quick and active, that can fly in a Moment, with all its Faculties, as high as Heaven: So also, he believes this immortal Spirit must meet with Entertainment suitable in the other World, because a Faculty without an Object is impossible in Nature. He finds also this Spirit within him foreboding an Eternity; and he cannot be persuaded, that the wise and perfect Author of his Being would have made him with Faculties, that should be an Over-match for his intended End: Or, that he has made him, only to delude him. And again, as he cannot persuade himself, that immortal Spirits should change their States, without any *Word* from their Creator, shewing

ing the Connexion between *this* and *that* State; or that a whole Order of Spirits should move out of this World to the next at *random*; or without any *Guide*: So he cannot find any Guide so certain, so clear, and so sufficient, as the *holy Bible*, a Guide so very sure, as that a sincere Compliance with the Directions thereof, doth in the very Nature of the Thing, make an immortal Spirit *necessarily* Happy, whether it be in the Body or out of the Body, or whatever Circumstances it can possibly be in. And further, he thinks the Christian Religion nothing the worse; that a reconciling Mediator steps in, between the offended Majesty of God and, offending Rebels: And, by an *equivalent Satisfaction*, makes it honourable for God to forgive us our Sins, and to save our Souls: (And who ever appeared on Earth, so God-like, and so like the *Et* and he came upon, as *Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour*.) Is this Scheme the less worth of God, that thereby it appears, *that there is none Holy as the Lord, and that Justice and Judgment are the Dwelling-place of his Throne*? Or, is it the less suitable to us, that it ascertains Hope, and influences our Love? The great Springs of Virtue are *Love* and *Hope*: Slacken these, you enervate all the Powers of Virtue, and give a *Loose* to all evil Passions. And there is nothing gives such Life and Vigour to these first Springs of Duty, as a lively Faith in the Incarnation, the Satisfaction for our Sins, and the Justification of our Persons made by the Son of God.

Tenthly, We preach *Christ the Wisdom of God*, in that admirable Constitution, of having all the Stock of Believers in his own Hand; and appointing Faith to be the recipient and correspondent Grace, between his Fulness and our Emptiness. All Fulness dwells in him, Col. i. 19. And out of his Fulness we receive Grace for Grace, John i. 16. O excellent! O wise Constitution! The Awfulness of the divine Majesty need not astonish us, nor the Terrors of Justice con-
found

found our weak and misgiving Minds! 'Tis *God incarnate* we immediately apply to! And all our Supplies are treasured up in him! The Stock of Believers is now made sure, being in such a Hand as cannot lose, nor forfeit the same! What made the Covenant of Works so uncertain? Why, the Improvement of habitual Grace in *Adam* depended on his own slippery mutable Will. I think it so far from being inconceivable, that an innocent Creature should make Defection from God; that on the contrary, since Dependence, Mutability, and Infirmary are included formally in the very Notion of a Creature; without a greater Strength than their own, and a Dependence on the same, the most innocent Creature in the World can scarce be conceived to stand. The *Angels* themselves, as needing it, chuse to be *Headed (a)* by *Christ* the Son of God, *Eph. i. 10.* on whom they depend, not only as a Head of *Dominion*, but as a Head of *Influences*; For, we are told, *Col. i. 17. That all Things consist by him*, the Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers, mentioned *Ver. 16.* as well as other Things. Yea, *Ver. 20, All Things, whether Things in Heaven, or Things on Earth, are said to be reconciled to him*: And the Decom-pound *(b)* here, is admirably fitted to the several Purposes meant; being, that it signifies both to reconcile former Enmity, and also to conciliate, or to make a Thing firmly one's own. The plain Meaning of all seems to be this, That all who are in Heaven, will own themselves to be eternal Debtors to the Grace of our *Immanuel* for the same.

And how know we, why one Reason of the Son of God, his chusing to dwell in the human Nature, may not be, because all the Creation, both its material and immaterial Part, doth meet together in Man: And hereby the Deity becomes enjoyable by the Creatures, each of them, according to their Capacity.

(a) ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι (b) αποκαταλλάξαι

ty. The Apostle, *Rom. viii. 19, 20.* speaks of the Hope and Expectation of the whole Creation, upon the Account of our Redeemer and what he has done. The primitive *Fathers*, their saying, That the first Person, or the Father, was always invisible, and that all the Appearances God ever made, were in the Person of the LOGOS (c); their saying, that the LOGOS did assume of old a created Nature, tho' not in a personal Union, according to which he formed the very Body of *Adam*: And their saying, that the *Envy* of the Angels, that the LOGOS should head the Creation, in a lower Nature than their own, was their *Fall* and *Apostasy* from God; seem to point something this Way. And I believe it will puzzle a Man to give a Reason, why, after the Consummation of all Things, and the Ransomed of the Lord are delivered unto his Father, Soul and Body, *without any Wrinkle, and without any Spot*, that yet the Son of God should remain for ever unite unto a created Nature, unless this was necessary to be the eternal *Mean* and *Bond* of Intercourse with the Deity. Were we sure of this Point, it would present to us a very glorious View of our Redeemer; and the vast and extensive Consequences of his Incarnation would immediately appear to every one. But, be this as it will, I am sure, the *Angels* are as humble and as hearty in the *Hallelujahs*, and triumphant Praises of our Redeemer, as any *Saint* in Heaven: As may be seen by their heavenly Songs, in the Book of the *Revelation*. And I am sure that the highest of the *Seraphims*, should they forget their Dependence on *Immanuel*, would soon degenerate into proud *Lucifers*. O! the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wildom and Knowledge of God, in placing all our Strength and Sufficiency in him, who is *God-Man*, whereby

Grace

(c) The unlearned Reader is to know, that by LOGOS is meant the second Person of the God-head called by the Apostle *John* LOGOS, or the Word. And hence the primitive *Fathers*, usually called *Jesus Christ* by that Name.

Grace and Glory are effectually entailed and secured!

And that *Faith* is appointed to be the *Mean* of receiving from Christ, never was there any Thing better contrived! Of all Ways possible, this is the Chief! Yea, what other Way was possible? How can there be Giving without Receiving, the Terms being Correlates? Or, how can the Blessings of Christ be ours, without Appropriation? Since to appropriate, and make ours, are convertible Terms. And 'tis Faith's *Idiom* to say, *My Lord and my God, my Prince and my Saviour, my Strength, my Rock, my Deliverer, &c.* It peculiarizeth its Object, and makes a Sweet Monopoly of it.

Here again sound *Divines* speak, as if they differed from one another, tho' where the Difference lies, is not easy to conceive. I suppose it is owned by all, That the Essence of justifying Faith stands not in a Man's believing that his Sins are pardoned, but in his receiving and resting on Christ for Remission of Sins: For what Reason hast thou to believe thy Sins are pardoned, more than any other Man, till thou hast first believed in Christ for the Remission of Sins? And again it will be owned, that where there is no Certainty of Evidence, the Soul can have a Certainty of Adherence, Dependence and Recumbency: And that 'tis of the Nature of Faith to reach towards Assurance, and in Part to attain it; that Doubting is not of its Nature, but is the Infirmary that cleaves to it; yea further, that where there is Strength and Clearness in the direct Acts, it will necessarily infer the Reflex Act; for tho' to believe and to know that I believe, are distinct Acts, yet where the direct Act is clear and pointed, the Reflection upon it will follow. 'Tis true indeed, that in Matters I do not distinctly know, or judge of little Importance to me, I may know them, and not know, or, at least, not mind that I know them; but if I clearly know, and assuredly be-

lieve what I reckon is of the last Consequence to me, I cannot but know that I know, and that I believe the same. So that it must be some Weakness in the direct Acts of Faith, that hinders our Sense and Assurance thereof.

This Dispute is, as if one were saying, That 'tis Essential to Grace to be sinless; because the Spirit of God, the Author of Grace, can never be the Author of Sin. Why, says another, this cannot be, for Grace is imperfect while on Earth, and Sin cleaves to the best. Who sees not that all this would be a Strife only about Words?

Lastly, *We preach Christ the Wisdom of God, in the Connexion he hath established between Grace and Glory; 2 Cor. iii. 18.* A Connexion so close and necessary, that one runs into the other: Grace being Glory in its Bud or *Embryo*, and Glory being Grace in the Flower and Perfection. Glory in its full Extent, what is it? 'Tis the clear Vision of God, full Assimilation to him, and perfect Joy and Satisfaction in him: All which is begun here, in the Illumination of our Minds, the Renovation of our Wills, and in our Soul's full and hearty Acquiescence in God manifested to us in Christ. Yea there is not a particular Grace, whether of Humility, Self-denial, Resignation, Reverence, &c. but as it is perfected in Heaven, so it bears a Part of the Glory there, and heightens their Happiness and Praises. How deep is the *Humility*, and *Self-denial* of the People triumphant above? What else do they mean, by their *casting down their Crowns before the Lamb, and him that sits on the Throne*? Do not they acknowledge by this, that they count not upon any Excellency as their own? That they hold all of Christ, as the *Alpha and Omega*, the *First* and the *Last*, and the *All* of their Happiness and Glory? And nothing can hinder this from being eternally delightful, but a Spice of that diabolical Pride, that was long since banished from Heaven. And how full and perfect is their *Resignation* to God? *Rev. iv.*

For

For thy Pleasure, say they, we are and were created:
 "It was not Indigence that moved thee to make us,
 "for we are as no Body in thy Sight; but for the
 "Pleasure thou hadst of manifesting thy Self, and thy
 "overflowing Goodness: And lo! we have no more
 "to do now, but to live for ever on thy All-suffici-
 "ency, and with full Conquiescence and Satisfacti-
 "on in thy good Pleasure." O what eternal Ease,
 Rest, Joy and Transport will there be in the Sense
 and Prospect of this! And again, how awful (tho'
 at the same Time serene and transporting) is their Ve-
 neration of the Beauty and Glory of the Lord! What
 else do the Angels mean, by their covering their Fa-
 ces, Isa. vi. before the bright and dazzling Holiness of
 God? And 'tis not a mean, but an Angelic Pleasure,
 which the Glorified find in that awful Seriousness and
 Composure of Mind, which a bright View of God
 forms in their Spirits. O! How serene and serious
 is the Joy of this! 'Tis like the smooth Face of a se-
 rene Sky, but yet strikes their Hearts with a strong,
 vital, and transforming Energy.

And so we might go through every other particu-
 lar Grace, and shew how every one of them partici-
 pates of Heaven's Glory: And that the Consummati-
 on of *this*, is but the Perfection of *these*; so natural
 is the Connexion between Grace and Glory. So that
 when God establishes a Law, *That the unrighteous*
and the unholy shall not enter into the Kingdom of
Heaven, he is but telling us what is the Nature of
 Things: 'Tis the imposing of no new Law, but what
 the Nature of Things imposes. 'Tis but telling us,
 That he does not confound Light and Darkness,
 Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, Heaven and Hell:
 But as the essential Differences between these will be
 eternally kept up in the other World, so also their
 essentially different Effects. I do not say, there is no
 other Punishment in Hell, but the natural penal Ef-
 fects of Sin: I have told before, there is an Inflicti-
 on of Punishment from the Hand of the Supreme

Judge. But I am shewing that the Righteous Judge of all the Earth, proceeds according to the Intrinsic, eternal and immutable Reasons, or Essences of Things.

I conclude this Discourse with a few Inferences.

I. Inference. Let us all endeavour through Grace, to find *Christ* in us the *Power of God*, and the *Wisdom of God*, in cleansing our Souls, mortifying our Corruptions, breaking the Power of Sin, subduing our Lusts and Passions, inlightning our Minds, vivifying our Spirits, strengthening our Hearts against all Temptations, and comforting our Souls against all Discouragements. O! May we feel the Spirit of *Christ* always in us, as a *Spirit of Love, Power, and of a sound Mind*; a *Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding*; a *Spirit of Counsel and Might*; a *Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord*! Alas! When there is little or no inward Sense of Soul, correspondent to the Doctrine we deliver; when it has not Efficacy upon our own Hearts and Lives; how burdensome is the Lord's Work in our Hands! We tug as at the Oar, in unassisted Duties, straitened in our Spirits, straitened in our Expressions. But, if we feel a deep and secret Energy in our Hearts, answerable to the Truths we deliver, this will clear the Head, elevate the Thoughts, fire the Affections, and fit us both for studying and preaching the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, in such a Manner, as we shall both *save our own Souls*, and some of *those that hear us*.

II. Inference. Let us preach *CHRIST*. Let *Christ* be the Sum and Substance of our Discourses, in whom all the Promises are *Yea* and *Amen*. And through whose Grace only, we can perform any Duty. Let the Doctrine of *Christ* be interwoven in all the Truths we deliver. It must be owned, That it was the preaching of *Christ* that was once the most powerful Mean of converting the World: And it cannot be denied, that the World, at this Time, needs Con-

version

version as much as ever. *Tho' the Cross of Christ should be a stumbling Block to the Jews, and Foolishness to the Greeks: Tho' it should be scandalous and distastful to some Persons, tainted with Prejudice; and strange and incredible to others, blinded with Self-conceit; Yet God forbid we should rejoice in any Thing, save in the Cross of Christ, the most powerful and persuasive Mean to crucifie us to the World, and the World to us.*

III. Inference. Let us preach *Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* Let us so preach him, as that our Faith may not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God. 'Tis true, we are to study a suitable Mixture of the Rational and Pathetick in our Discourses: Yet so as not to make Reason the Measure and Standard of our Faith. For, when Reason hath stretched itself to its uttermost, it is not proportioned to supernatural Objects. Reason does enough, if, by any Illustrations, it can shew that the Mysteries of our holy Religion are not unreasonable. But, if Reason, when it cannot frame a Conceir, commensurate to the Height, Length, and Depth of Gospel Mysteries, shall think to bring them down to its own inferior Capacity, and so, tho' it deny not a divine Revelation, yet, by putting a low and flat Sense upon the Mysteries revealed, goes about to dispirit or explain them away: In such a Case, it denies Christ to be the *Power, and Wisdom of God.* To think, with some of our Metaphysicians, *that nothing is possible, but what we can conceive*, is to make the human Intellect the very Standard of the Power and Wisdom of God. I think our Reason should be very modest in its Decisions about Possibilities and Impossibilities: Especially, since it has often happened in natural Things, (Reason's proper Province) that what has been thought *impossible* by some, has been demonstrated to be *true* by others. Dost thou say, that thou wilt not believe any thing to be possible, but what thou

thou canst conceive, or what thou thinkest not attended with insuperable Difficulties? Go, try this Rule of thine in any one of God's essential Perfections: Try to get a positive Conception of his *Immensity*, how he is *totus in toto*, and *totus in qualibet mundi parte*; how he is *wholly here, and wholly in another Place*. Get a positive Notion of an *Eternity*, without any Succession in the Duration. Try what Conceit thou hast of *Infinity*; and whether the Term does not necessarily import, that it transcends thy Conception? Or, if, for this Reason, thou wilt not believe there is a *God*, because thou canst not comprehend him; then reconcile these two Terms together, *INFINITE, MATTER*: Or, if infinite Matter appear too bulky to grasp within a Thought, let it alone, and confine thy Thoughts to the supposed Powers, and Affections of thy supposed eternal Matter; and essay to reconcile these inconsistent Propositions; *Matter is thoughtless, and yet the productive Cause of all Intelligences: Matter is stupid, and yet infinite in all possible Perfections*. Or, try to join these two *Ideas* together, *UNACTIVE, CAUSE*: Or, if thou cannot get such Propositions and Terms as these to meet any nearer, than the two Ends of a Contradiction, but still thou wantest Satisfaction as to that material World of thine; go, chase it close in thy Thoughts, till it vanish out of thy Sight. Or call up only an *Ideal* Existence, or be in Hazard of being lost, even when 'tis among thy Fingers, and besets thee on all Sides. Or, at least, come not to a positive Resolution, of either knowing all Mysteries, or not believing them, till thou findest any one Thing in Nature, suppose it were a Pile of Goals, which thou comprehendest, and can explain all the *Phænomena* thereof. And yet for all this, thou needst not throw away thy *Reason*, as if it were an useless Thing, but may be abundantly well conceited of thy Intellectuals, tho' thou shouldst confess *That God is wiser than Man*.

IV. Inference. Let us preach *Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* Let us preach *Christ not with the enticing Words of Mens Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.* 'Tis true, a contemptible Lowness of Speech, or to deliver the Truths of the Gospel, in a rude and slovenly Manner, is to debase the Majesty of the Word of God. But to be labouring on in Stile, and giving out all our Words, Sentences and Periods, as in Weight and Measure, however this may suit a Declaimer, I am not so well satisfied that it suits a Gospel Minister, labouring for the Salvation of Souls. I am not at all against a just Commendation of Stile; without all Doubt, Eloquence is beautiful, charming and enticing; (and they are lucky to whom it is natural.) But there are several Things, that may discourage from an operose Labour about Stile. Who knows, but the Eloquence that makes a Discourse more pleasant, may not sometimes render it less powerful? We often see, that 'tis one Thing to amuse, and another Thing to move. And how hard is the Hearer oftentimes put to it, to separate what's real from the Phantoms of Imagination! And, if we may judge by Events, so far as we can perceive them, we'll be tempted to think *that manly Truths delivered, as Bates speaks of Baxter, with a noble Negligence of Stile, may be as successful for the obtaining of the Ends of our Ministry.* I am not sure whether a scrupulous Regard to Accuracy in Stile may not sometimes check that Strength of Thought, and Passion too, that may be more useful both to Speaker and Hearer, than any tedious Accuracy. And again, I know not if the Rules of Eloquence be to this Day fully adjusted. Some of the primitive Fathers were celebrated for the Variety of their Figures, the Justness of their Comparisons, and the Agreeableness of their Descriptions and Narrations. The eastern Nations did, and to this Day do express themselves in great Images, bold Metaphors, big and pompous Terms: And perhaps this will

will please best, where People are led mainly by their Senses, and cannot judge by Principles, or lay hold on abstract Notions of the Mind. The *Ciceronian* Stile now obtains the Vogue in thir Parts of the World, because of its Naturalness, Easiness and Plainness; which yet in the Age next to himself, was censured as an Iron-stile. I intend all this only against an *operose* Labour about Stile, to the too much forcing or hampering of Nature. And what I mean, plainly is I would have every Man, in his own Dialect, to *preach Christ, and speak of the wonderful Works of God*; some in their polite, smooth, running Stile; others in their strong, sinewy and masculine Stile; and others with that Spirit and Vivacity, that cannot endure to be checkt or fettered: And let each improve his own *Idiom*. So we find the Divine *Penmen* of the Sacred Oracles differing each in his Stile, and each excelling in his own Peculiarity, and every one of them the best in his own Kind. (For tho' some of our Gram-marians carp at the Scriptural Stile, they do but make it evident that themselves have not overmuch Skill in true Criticism.) And 'tis certain, that Men must as necessarily vary in their Stile, as they differ in the Variety of their Pulse, or in the Calmness or Rapidity of their Spirits. So that 'tis impossible, that the same Standard should suit every one; nor would it seem to quadrate with the infinite Variety of Divine Providence, nor with the various Necessities of Men, nor, as I think, with the general Edification of Souls.

V. Inference. *Let us preach Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* Let us in a particular Manner demonstrate Him to be the *power* of God, and the *Wisdom* of God. General Discourses commonly have but little Effect: They produce only a general Love to God, to Christ, or to his People. 'Tis a Mistake of the Ungodly, if they think, they love any Thing

Thing particularly in God; no, they love not so much as his *Mercy*, but their own Mithapen Idea of the same: For, to love his Mercy is to love him, as saving us from Misery, and yet they would be indulged in Sin, comprehensive in its Nature of all Misery. And as little do they love any particular Excellency in *Jesus Christ*: They love him not even as a *Saviour*; they would love him only, if he would save them in their Sins: The plain Sense of which is, They would love him, if he were not a Saviour; or if he were any Thing else but a Saviour. And sicklike, their Love to the People of God is only in general; but as to this, or that particular Saint, they cannot love him; only they say, *Be ye warmed, and filled, notwithstanding, give them not these Things which are needful to the Body*: And so all their Love is only to some Metaphysick Saints in the Clouds, or some abstracted Notions of *sainthood*. And this is the Effect commonly of General Discourses, that People rest only in some fine Notions, without any Sense of the vital, enlightning Power of the Word. But, as I conceive, 'tis the plain, particular, downright preaching of the Word, the laying it open in plain Terms to the Mind, and laying it hard to the very Conscience by Exhortation, Rebuke, Comfort, &c. that most usually makes the Hearer wise unto Salvation.

Last Inference. Let us preach *Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*. Let the Doctrine of Christ's being the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God, enlighten and invigorate all the Points of *Morality* we press upon our People. 'Tis certain, that *Morality* is an essential Part of Religion: For a Person to pretend to much devotional Exercise, and yet allow himself to be sensual, intemperate, incontinent, covetous, unjust, oppressive, malicious, proud, censorious, merciless, &c. Or, to live in the Love of any known Sin, is to boast of a Religion, that cannot profit himself, nor can any other be the better of it.

But

But then the strongest Motives to all Moral Duties, are from Christ: And the only sufficient Aid is in him: And 'tis Faith that is, the animating Principle. What is true Morality? 'Tis a dutiful Behaviour to God, not only as *Creatures*: I doubt there is here a Source of some Errors; many consider themselves simply as *Creatures*, and hence 'tis nothing with them, but *up and be doing*: But why should we not consider our selves as really we are? And consider our State as really it is? Is there not a moral Fitness in all this? And what are we? We are *Creatures*, and we are *fallen Creatures*: And true Morality has a Respect to what is to be done in the present Circumstances we are in. Hence, I say, true Morality is our dutiful Behaviour to God, not only as *Cratures*, but as *lapsed* *Creatures*: Where both doing, and Strength for doing are wanting: And, where, tho' we should do well for the future, we cannot make amends for what is past. What Place can there then be for true Morality without Faith in Christ, as the Power of God and the Wisdom of God? 'Tis an Article even of natural Religion, That *without Faith, 'tis impossible to please God*: And 'tis an Article of revealed Religion, That *without Christ, John xv. 5. ye can do nothing*. So that however gloriously and Magnificently some Men may talk of moral Virtues, only from the Principles of natural Religion; yet we have Reason to think, they are but apish Imitations of Virtue, some Shadows of Morality, some shriveled Parcels, without any co-herent System, or co-herent Frame, if they are done without any Regard to Christ: Or, at least, without any Influence from him; and especially where the Gospel is preached. For, whether, as the Sun by his Beams, spreads a dawning Light, while the Body of the Sun is not seen; so the *Sun of Righteousness* may scatter his Rays, where himself is not personally known: And whether those Persons, on whom his Light in this manner shines, may rejoice
in

in his Light, improve it, and be thankful to the Author of it, whoever he be, thus *worshipping an unknown God*. And whether such Persons as these, upon the Account of Christ's Satisfaction to divine Justice, may be admitted to some lower, and less light-some Mansions in Heaven, are Points we cannot say any Thing about. Only with respect to all that have Opportunity of hearing the Gospel, I tell you again, in Christ's Words, that without Christ, * or without a vital Union with Christ, and a lively Faith in him, ye can do nothing: 'Tis eternally impossible that ye can.

And, O! How wise! How excellent and orderly is the whole Plan of the Gospel! The Grace of Faith gives us a Sight of him, who is invisible, and presents to us his most awful Attributes, to the filling of our Souls with Fear: And, at the same time, points to the Incarnation, and Sufferings of the Son of God, as a Ground of Hope. Hence follow ingenious Contrition and Repentance for Sin: Hence deep Humility and Self-abasement: Hence a pleasing Admiration of Redeeming Grace: And hence fervent Love to God, and the blessed Redeemer: Hence sincere and universal Love to our Neighbours; which Love to our Fellow-creatures, is not a moral Act, unless it flow from Love to God, and a Regard to his Commandments; For, 1 *John* v. 2. *Hereby we know that we love the Children of God, when we love God, and keep his Commandments*: And hence again follows unlimited Obedience, the generous Principle of Love enlarging the Heart for all the Duties of Holiness, Righteousness and Charity. And a Man needs no more to be clear of this Scheme, but to consider his present Posture God-wards, or to bethink himself,

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* *ἡ ἀγαπή ἐμὴ* *seorsum a me*, being of stronger Import than *ἀγαπᾷ*.

“ I am a *Creature*, I am a *revolted Creature*, and
“ I am now a *returning Creature*; and, if I re-
“ turn, it must be in the Way wherein I can be ac-
“ cepted; and I can be accepted only in *Christ*, and
“ by *Faith* in Him.” And all Praise, Honour and
Glory unto our God, who makes us accepted in
the Beloved. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

